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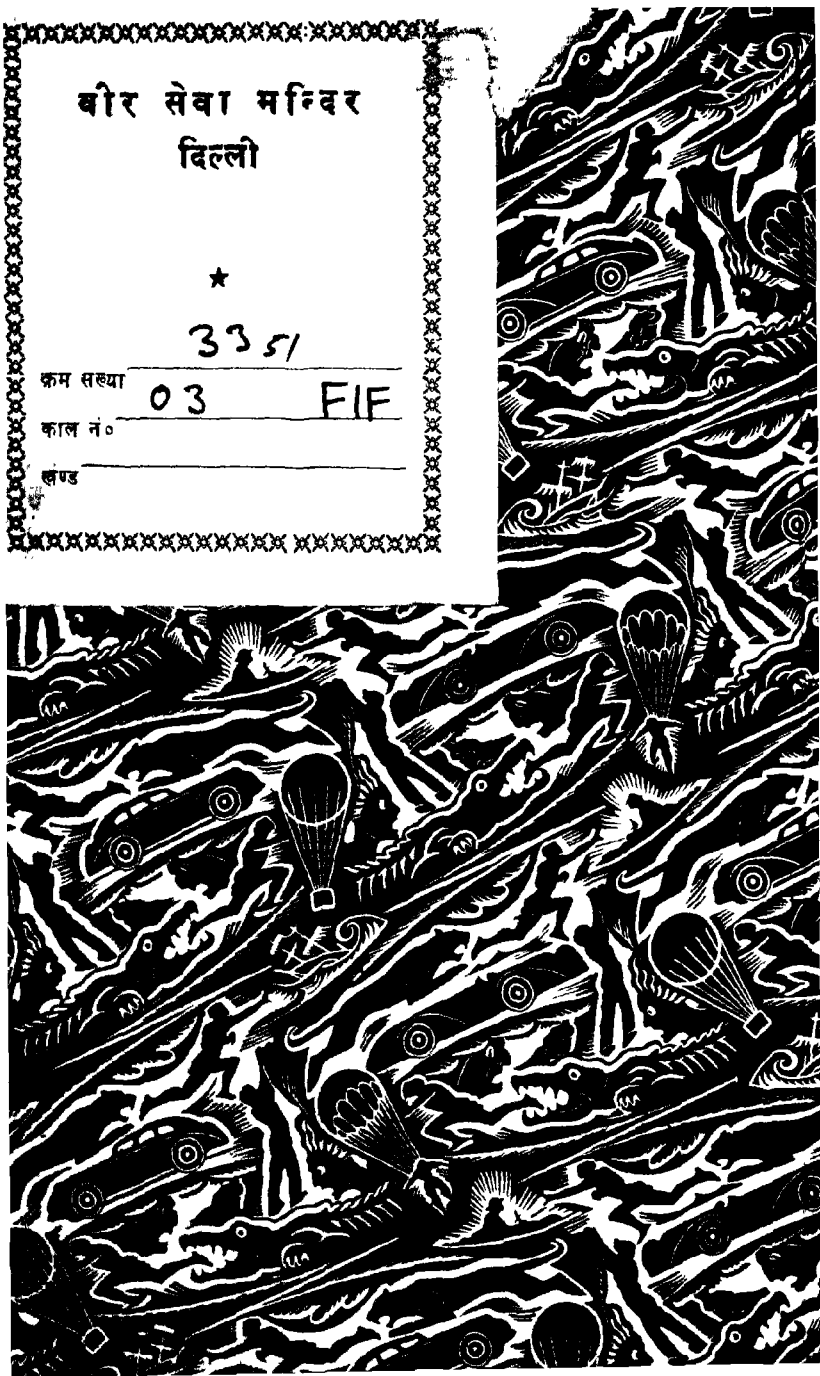
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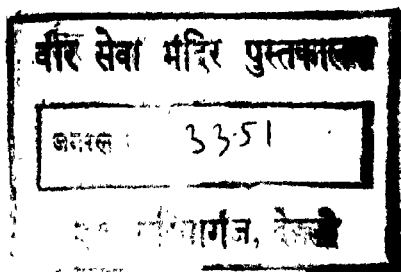
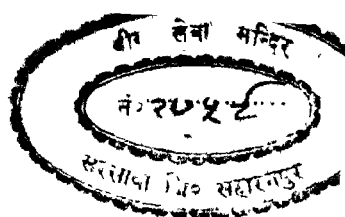
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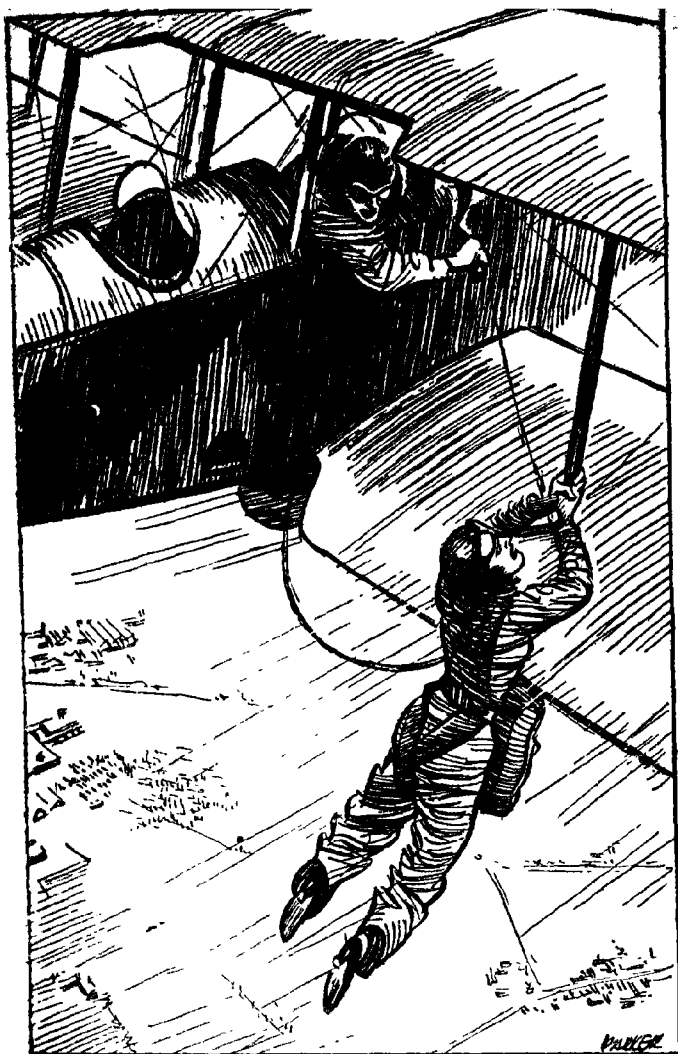












*She was seized with frightful panic. Like a drowning cat  
she clutched at the wing.*

*Frontpiece*

*See p 257*

# FIFTY AMAZING HAIRBREADTH ESCAPES

•

THE TIMES OF INDIA  
"FAMOUS FIFTY" SERIES



THE TIMES OF INDIA  
BOMBAY AND CALCUTTA

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Editor wishes to express his thanks for permission to include in this volume stories by the following authors :

- ACHMED ABDULLAH, *An Afghan Raid* : to the Author.
- LIEUTENANT A. BAUERMEISTER, *The House on the Marsh* (from *Spies Break Through*) : to the Author and Constable & Co. Ltd.
- J. BILBO, *When Al Capone was Ambushed* (from *Carrying a Gun for Al Capone*) : to Putnam & Co. Ltd.
- W. J. BLACKLEDGE, *Ants* (from *Hell's Broth Militia*) : to Sampson Low, Marston & Co. Ltd.
- F. BUCK and E. ANTHONY, *Man-Eater* : to the Authors.
- SIR MALCOLM CAMPBELL, *Breaking the Record* (from *My Thirty Years of Speed*) : to Hutchinson & Co. Ltd.
- M. DONOVAN, *Escape from the Foreign Legion* (from *March or Die*) : to the Author and Cassell & Co. Ltd.
- F. J. FRANKLIN, *Scouting in the Boer War* : to the Author and George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd.
- J. H. FREEBODY, *In a South American Rebellion* (from *Heat, Hell, and Humour*) : to Sampson Low, Marston & Co. Ltd.
- ALAIN GERBAULT, *Gales in the Hurricane Zone* (from *The Fight of the 'Firecrest'*) : to the Author and George Newnes Ltd.
- D. GRINNELL-MILNE, *Escape from a German Prison Camp* : to the Author.
- H. K. HALES, *Adventures with Balloons* (from *Autobiography of the Card*) : to Sampson Low, Marston & Co. Ltd.
- F. A. M. HEDGES, *A Grim Crocodile Hunt* and *Face to Face with Death* (from *Battles with Giant Fish*) : to Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd.
- CHERRY KEARTON, *Charge of the Rhinoceros* (from *Adventures with Animals and Men*) : to the Author and Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd.
- JOHN LANGDON-DAVIES, *Toledo Under Fire* (from *Behind the Spanish Barricades*) : to the Author and Secker & Warburg Ltd.
- F. H. LAW, *Cannibal Gymnastics* : to the Author and George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd.
- J. S. LEE, *The Coming of the Tiger* (from *Underworld of the East*) : to Sampson Low, Marston & Co. Ltd.
- J. G. LOCKHART, *When Jellucoe Escaped Drowning* : to Philip Allan & Co. Ltd.
- EVALYN WALSH MACLEAN, *Drink, Drugs and the Hope Diamond* (from *Father Struck it Rich*) : to the Author and Faber & Faber Ltd.

- J. MILLIGAN, *I Came Alive Out of Death Valley* (from *I Didn't Stay Honest*): to Sampson Low, Marston & Co. Ltd.
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- H. T. WILKINS, "*Q*" *Ship Meets Submarine* and *Treasure Hunters in Mexico*: to the Author.
- E. M. WHIMOT-BUXTON, *The Work of a Traitor* (from *Adventures Perilous*): to Sands & Co. Ltd.
- EX-LEGIONNAIRE 1384, *The Madman in the Desert* (from *Spies of the Sahara*): to Sampson Low, Marston & Co. Ltd.
- SERGEANT BOURGOGNE, *Retreat from Moscow* (from *Memoirs of Sergeant Bourgogne*): to Peter Davies Ltd.

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# THE WINDJAMMER FILM

By

ALAN J. VILLIERS

RONALD GREGORY WALKER was a newspaper reporter on the staff of *The Mercury*, Hobart. As such, part of his duties consisted in writing up what news there was in the port in a column called, exactly why is not clear, "Shipping Intelligence." He often used to say that he did not know that shipping had any intelligence; and in any case no intelligence was necessary in chronicling whatever news there was about it.

But that is by the way.

Ronald Walker was deeply interested in the ships and in all concerning them. He loved the newspaper work too, and knew that city life held no more interesting job. All his young life he had been strongly interested in the sea. Ships and travel, sea and aeroplanes, strange lands—these things moved him. He had a little yacht he called the *Murmur*, and in her many a happy week-end was spent. He wrote about yachting matters for his newspaper and pottered about the ships that came to port, and his days were pleasant.

Hobart, small though it was, had a lovely harbour to which strange ships sometimes came—great steamers, with greenheart bows and slipways cut into their sterns, which were bound upon Antarctic whaling voyages; big steamers in distress from the storms of the roaring 'forties; game little crayfishing schooners and, now and again, big sailing ships with timber from the Baltic.

He did not care about the big Orient and P. & O. steamers, carrying to England squatters' daughters whose money might have been better spent in their own Australia. The spectacle of the big cargo steamers he found interesting but not stirring.

But the sight of a great Cape Horn sailing ship deeply

moved him. They did not come often to Hobart; when one did, it was with difficulty that he could be prevailed upon to go home. He loved to go across the broad Derwent in his yacht and to lie in the sun on the cliffs at Bellerive, looking at the loveliness of Hobart at the foot of its mountain, and at the shipping round its wharves, and to dream. He had ideas; he thought deeply. He was not content to find his ideas and to shape his actions from what he read in newspapers, heard other people say, or saw upon the screens of motion-picture theatres.

He was very restless. He loved Hobart and was profoundly moved by the grandeur of its surrounding scenery. But he wanted to see the great world outside.

One day he conceived the idea of making a film of the voyage of a Cape Horn sailing ship. He told me about it—for I was a reporter on that newspaper too—and I said it couldn't be done. How could we make a film? I asked. We had no money. We were not camera-men. We knew nothing about the production side of the film industry, and had no chance to learn. I agreed that the subject was a stirring one and that the film should be made, but I did not see how we could do it.

He said we could. He said there was a moving-picture camera on the market that was almost fool-proof. We agreed, then, that we should get one of these and practise with it the following year—which would have been 1930—shipping together in a Cape Horn sailing ship to make the picture.

Before we had a chance to buy the camera, we read a letter in the London *Daily Mail*, written by a Mr. C. J. Greene, imploring somebody to make a real sailing-ship film while the chance remained. The letter was a serious thing to us. It meant, although probably no one would take notice of its sound sense, the idea was broadcast. We thought that we should have to set out immediately if we were not to be forestalled. We decided immediately to go.

There were many difficulties. We had only a few days to get to Wallaroo, in South Australia, to join the Finnish ship *Grace Harwar* there, loading wheat for England.

We were still without cameras, without money, without any one to back us—we knew it was hopeless to look for any—and without the slightest experience of motion-picture art.

We hurriedly gave notice to our news editor. Walker raised half the money (about fifteen hundred dollars) on an insurance policy, and I sold my home to get the other half.

We ordered cameras and film to be sent to us from Sydney and picked them up in Melbourne.

Six days after we had read that letter in the London *Daily Mail*, we shipped as sailors in the *Grace Harwar* at Wallaroo.

We went aboard late at night with our cameras and film in our sea-bags. We said nothing to anybody of our intentions; we signed as sailors, to do the ship's work. We considered then that it was not the ship's business what else we might have done. We knew about sailing-ship masters and feared that if we opened our mouths about this film, other able seamen might be found and we should lose our jobs. There was also the possibility of the captain cabling to his owner and raising the question of film rights and such things. It is the film producers' own fault that there exists a world-wide impression that the outpouring of gold unlimited is a necessity and even a pastime to any one concerned with the making of pictures; but we were not ordinary film producers, and we had no gold.

So we joined the ship and did our work with the others, and said nothing. In the course of time the *Grace Harwar* sailed. She was a lovely full-rigged ship of 1749 tons, and ideal for our purpose. She was Clyde built, over forty years old; she had an open wheel, and none of those labour-saving devices of later days. She was a genuine sister of the Horn of forty years ago—one of the last full-rigged ships, if not the very last, to go round the Horn.

In Wallaroo we discharged the *Grace Harwar's* ballast that she had brought down from Wilmington, North Carolina, after discharging a cargo of Peruvian guano there towards the end of 1928. The ballast out, we took the wheat in. Half the crew ran away and others were shipped in their place. We took aboard, from the police, a curious Swedish-speaking negro from the West Indies, who had deserted the Erikson bark *Penang* not long before. He was a prohibited immigrant in Australia, being black, and to avoid a five-hundred-dollar fine we had to take him with us out of the country. He had been cook on the *Penang*; we had our cook, so the negro was to be merely a passenger.

The grain loaded, the hatches battened down and breakwaters built up on them, the sails bent and the gear all clear, the water-tanks full, and the negro aboard, the food all stored, the lifeboats lashed down, the wheel gear oiled, we dropped our moorings and put out to sea. That was on 17th April 1929. It was not until 3rd September, 138 days later, that

we arrived at our destination. In the interval one of us was killed ; a second went out of his mind ; a third went overboard. We were short of food and the boat leaked. We tried to make Cape Town in distress, but could not. We saw black albatrosses and suffered terribly off the Horn in the dead of winter. . . .

We might have known these things would happen. We had thirteen in our crew—thirteen hands before the mast. I don't remember that we noticed it in Wallaroo before we left. We remembered about it well enough after.

We had a Frenchman, a Londoner, four Australians, and the rest were Finns—Swedish-speaking Finns, mostly from the Aland Islands, where the ship belonged. Only two of the crew had been round the Horn before—the Londoner and I. The Londoner and I had been in more ships under the Finn flag than any of the Finns aboard. He had sailed in the *Olivebank*, I in *Lawhill* and *Herzogin Cecilie*. The Finns were all first-voyage boys, some deserters from other ships, two or three members of the original crew who had joined the *Grace Harwar* in Swansea nearly two years before. The average age of our crew was about nineteen. Three had never been to sea before. But they were all fine boys.

They settled down manfully. They were strong and willing, which is a lot ; there was an entire absence of that old bickering spirit which was so evident in sail's heyday, when every fo'c'sle had its boss, its bloodshed, and its undercurrent of cliques and jealousies. We had no fight the whole voyage. I have never seen a fight in a Finnish ship.

We began the voyage well. We knew that winter was coming on, so we prayed for a quick return and run round the Horn. The Horn is bad enough in summer, and we did not want to prolong our passage of the west winds getting there. In six days we had passed to the south of Tasmania. That was good. We had a strong west wind the whole time and a big sea. It was piercingly cold and the little *Grace Harwar* was inclined to throw the sea about her decks a lot. We blew out a sail or two. The first night out the mizen t'gall'nt sail blew out of its bolt-ropes, and we set no sail upon that yard thereafter because the ship had none. There were no spare t'gall'nt sails fit to stand down there. The mizen t'gall'nt yard had to go bare until a new sail was cut and sewn. That was some time.

We did not mind the cold. We did not mind the ceaseless wet at the cold wheel, the seas that slopped over us, the teeth-

chattering peril of the work aloft. We laughed at the big seas and thought it a joke when a larger one than usual fell aboard with a shock that made the whole ship tremble and threatened to do her serious damage. What did we care while the wind was fair and we came quickly towards the Horn ?

From Wallaroo to Cape Horn is, roughly speaking, about six thousand miles. If we ran nine knots before the strong west winds we should make it in thirty days—say thirty-five or thirty-eight, allowing for some spells of lesser winds and maybe some days hove to when there was too much wind to use. We went that way as all sailing ships do, in the hope of getting strong west winds, in order that if we had to suffer acute discomfort, and cold and wet, and ceaseless work, at least it would not last long, and we would be quickly round. The sailing ship does not mind strong wind, as long as it is fair. We had nothing to fear from westerly gales, which would help us on ; it was the wind from the east we feared.

The wind came from the east. It hauled round to south-east and hurled itself on us with all the sting of the Antarctic ice in its frigid and unwelcome blast. We could do nothing with the strong east wind. We shortened down and hove to. This was in the southern waters of the Tasman Sea, between Tasmania and New Zealand, across which we had been making to pass to the south of New Zealand on our way to the Horn. The Tasman Sea is storm-lashed and furious in winter-time ; we knew that, but we expected at least that we would have west wind.

The wind refused flatly to go back towards any point west. We held on, giving the ship the full mainsail in the hope that it would hold her head up a little, decrease her leeway, and give us some longitude towards Cape Horn. The newcomers to the sea were sick and utterly fed up with it. They wondered why, if once one ship had sailed that road and met with hell, any others were foolhardy enough to try it after.

The sea froze where it touched the steel of the bulwarks ; one of our pigs was drowned ; the rain and the sleet froze into the serving of the foot-ropes, and aloft was hell. "It takes guts, this game, my God it does !" wrote Ronald Walker. He had guts, but he was killed afterwards. . . .

We tried our best to beat those easterly winds, hoping always that they would stop, believing that the Wind God would take pity on us, and at least let us come to the Horn, no matter what torment he wreaked on the way. But it was not fair to delay us so, with that accursed wind. The east



wind continued, with no slightest sign of ever giving up. Gale succeeded gale; constantly the open decks of the old full-rigger were awash; one had to look lively to the lifelines going to the wheel. At night the look-out men could not go to the fo'c'sle head. The seas came over there green, and if they had gone there they would have been drowned. We began to notice how short-handed we were, with six in one watch and seven in the other. . . .

In the end Captain Svensson got fed up with the east wind, and put up the helm to run for Cook Straits, which separate the two islands of New Zealand, intending to pass through that way into the South Pacific beyond if the east wind would not allow us to pass south of that Dominion. We reached Cook Straits after three weeks at sea; and then it fell calm and we couldn't get through. Four days we lay there, wallowing, stagnantly, with Mount Egmont on one hand and the rocky northern shores of the south island on the other. We were about to up helm and stand on northwards to pass right round the northern extremity of New Zealand, when a west wind came at last and saw us through.

We saw the lights of Wellington, capital of New Zealand, and reported the ship all well. The west wind kept with us for a day or two, and saw us clear of the Chatham Islands. We began to think it meant to stay, and that we could come to the Horn without further undue misery.

But then the wind faltered, and stopped again. When it returned it was from the east, with fog and rain and gale in miserable succession. Day succeeded day in sodden misery and cold gale. We went out to so many alternate watches on deck, hoping that while we slept the wind had changed, and were disappointed. We gave up hoping any more. We accepted what was in store for us with sullen indifference. Oilskins were long since useless; there was no dry spot on the ship, or dry rag. The fo'c'sle was washed out time and time again by great seas that swept joyously through the inefficient doors. When the doors were shut the atmosphere was stifling. When they were open the sea swept in. We kept them shut, preferring to die of suffocation rather than of exposure. We hardly ever had warm food. The seas put the galley fire out; and, because the water swept so incessantly across the main deck where the fresh-water pump was, we could not work the inefficient pump for fear of mingling salt water with the fresh, and went thirsty. We were cold, wet through, and hungry. There is no heating system on a

full-rigged ship ; the very cockroaches and bugs in the bunks retired from active service and might have all died for all we saw of them.

I give an extract or two from poor Walker's diary scrupulously kept until the day he died, the better to describe this section of the voyage. He brought new eyes to it, and a new mind. I had been that way before, and described it before, but had not seen it as he had.

" May 16, 29 days out [he wrote]. Looking back, those twenty-nine days seem an indeterminable age. Many strange things have happened in them. . . . Frenchman and I were sent aloft this morning, in a hard squall, which showed every sign of developing into a real Cape Horn snorter. We climbed into the shrouds at 6 a.m. in pitch darkness. It was raining steadily and big seas were coming aboard. The wind had a cold sting which gradually froze us to the marrow in spite of our heavy clothing, oilskins, and sea-boots. We were up there for nearly two hours while a cold and cheerless dawn broke over the wind-torn sea ; and we fought with the sodden sails until the work exhausted us and pained. The rain persistently drove at us, soaking our caps and oilskins ; the cold water trickled down through crevices which only water could find. Our fingers were stiff and blue with the cold, and red with blood from tears with the jagged wire gear. . . .

" At first we shivered when an icy finger of water found its way down our backs or up our sleeves, but soon we were so wet and cold that we ceased to care. Get wet and stay wet is the best policy for sailing ships. The greatest agony of mind comes when you change into comparatively dry, only to know with horrible certainty that as soon as you go on deck again everything will be sodden through once more. . . .

" May 19, 32 days out. You stand a miserable lookout on the fo'c'sle head for hours with plenty of time for thought, but the antidote for depression lies just behind you, towering into the darkness, sweeping on and on along the rolling road, heaving and stumbling as she meets a sea, rushing on again and on ; indomitable, insuperable as fate. Great seas come up to meet the ship, thrusting at her, shouldering one another to get at her like footballers in a mad ' scrimmage.' Up and up they heave gathering for the blow. You turn to watch them. The wind howls in your face and the sea spits at you spitefully, driving its spray above and around. A great

sea, a liquid mountain of menace, hangs poised above the ship. Up, up it leaps, shouldering its smaller children aside, the splendid crest whitening where it breaks, lending a touch of colour as the plume of a warrior's helmet. Down, down, sinks the ship, shuddering already at the impending blow.

"A hundred lesser blows she has already avoided; this mighty one she cannot beat. She writhes like a living thing, in fear and trembling. She heels over heavily. She hovers frighteningly. . . . The stars shoot suddenly past the spars—not so bad, with them out!—careering madly across the sky. The ship receives the blow full, staggering at the impact. A tremor runs through the labouring hull. . . . But the shattered sea-crest has met its match. The warrior's plume has dropped; the ship rises again, tumbling hundreds of tons of roaring, fighting water from her gushing washports. The sea sweeps her furiously end to end, murderously intent upon human prey. Baulked of that, it shifts whatever is movable, and snarls and hisses at the hatch breakwaters maddeningly intent upon breaking them down. . . . But the ship wins. Under her load of hundreds of tons of seething water she rolls on, recovering her poise, steadying herself to meet the next onslaught, and the next, and the next after that. For forty years and more now she has been doing that. Beautiful and game old ship!

On the thirty-eighth day Walker was killed at his work in the rigging.

It was very simple. Just one of those ordinary everyday accidents that nine hundred times kill nobody, and on the nine hundred and first wreak vengeance for their previous failings on some innocent.

We were setting the fore upper t'gall'nts'l, which had not been loosened since its getting in described in his diary. The wind, which for so long had been from something east, had at last something of west in it, and we were giving the ship a little more sail to help her on—not that the fore upper t'gall'nts'l would make much difference really, but the psychological effect was not to be scorned.

Walker went up to loose the sail with a small boy named Finla. It was a little after four o'clock in the morning, the worst time of the day. We had so few in a watch that it was bad to send two men into the rigging, but there were reasons for that. We had coffee at half-past five, and the tradition of the sea is that, if there is any work afoot and it is

not finished before the coffee bells, then whatever time is taken up with finishing the work is lost. The coffee hour is not extended merely because some of it has been given up to the ship's work. A good mate will see that his watch receive their coffee-time unbroken

That was why our second mate sent both Walker and young Finila to loose the fore upper t'gall'nt that fateful morning. It was very securely made fast, with many gaskets to stand against the Cape Horn gale ; since it had been made fast it had become sodden with rain, and the canvas had swollen. Ice had formed in the gaskets, and any sailor knows that it may take an hour to get a sail loose in those conditions. With the two of them at it they managed in half an hour, and then we on deck—five of us, with the second mate—began the painful process of heaving the yard aloft by the capstan.

When it was half-way up, the second mate saw that a gasket was foul on the weather clew. The sail would not hoist properly. He yelled aloft to Walker, through the rain, to go out on the lower t'gall'nt yard to clear the gasket. Walker went, and cleared it. He called down to us that everything was clear. We began to heave again ; the halliards carried away and the yard came tumbling down.

It fell on Walker beneath it, and killed him there.

We did not know that he was dead when we rushed up the mast and found him unconscious between the yards. We thought that he was merely senseless. There was no sign of wound, save for some blood oozing slowly from his mouth. It never occurred to us that he was dead ; we were too much concerned with bringing him to, and getting him to the deck that we might see the extent of his injuries, and what we could do about them. I tried to bring him to with cold water that had been brought up from the deck. I didn't know how hopeless it was ; we wanted to restore him to his senses in order that he might help us with the difficult task of getting him, from high on that swinging mast, to the deck. It was not easy to bring a senseless body down that slippery and pitching rigging.

But he did not come to. We rigged a gantline and lowered him down, gently, carefully.

When we got to the bottom Captain Svensson took one look.

"He is dead," he said.

Dead ! The shock was stunning. We did not—could not—believe it. Nowhere is the awfulness of death more

painfully apparent than at sea. Ashore there are diversions, one forgets. There are other people to see, other people to talk to, newspapers to read, traffic to dodge. One is not missed so much. But at sea in a full-rigged ship there is only the one little band, and always the wind moans in the rigging and the sea rolls on. When one is gone no one comes to take his place; there are no diversions; nothing happens to deaden sorrow and make up for the loss of the one who is gone. . . .

We buried him from the poop next day, with the Finnish ensign at half-mast and the crew white-faced and deeply moved. I do not know anything more moving than sea-burial; not the committal of some poor corpse of a steerage passenger, from high on the steamship's promenade deck in the dead of night, lest the saloon passengers be put off their dancing for a moment, but the last sad rites over a shipmate's bier in a Cape Horn windjammer. We had all known him so well! At sea like that you see the utmost innards of a man, what he is made of. No pretence of city life, no masking of real intents and real character, will pass here—you see all. We knew poor Walker and we liked him well, and this was his end. . . .

The captain read some prayers; we sang Swedish and English hymns. There was a short address. The ship was hove to, sadly wallowing, with the moan of the wind in her rigging now quietened by her deadened way, the surly wash of the sea about her decks now softened. . . . We carried him to the rail, tilted the hatch; there was a dull plop and it was all over. . . .

We put the ship before the wind again and sailed on.

It was the fifty-seventh day before we got to the Horn. It was June then, and the Horn is hell in June, as Masefield says. But for us it was not so bad. We had a gale from the west, and though the sea ran huge and the cold was almost overpowering, the old ship ran on and we were glad.

We wanted to come round the Horn now more quickly than ever, that we might forget something of the tragedy of the other side of it. Death is a worrying thing at sea, especially when its cause is bad gear that might have killed another of us. At the wheel, on the lonely look-out, aloft on the yards, sleeping in the wet, cold fo'c'sle—we remembered the one who had died, turned the details of the tragedy over and over in our minds, until it was not good for us longer to remain in that saddening belt of the wild ocean. A boy screamed

in his sleep ; he had dreamed he saw Walker's wraith, coming in the fo'c'sle to call us.

The ship began to leak in the height of a gale ; the pumps jammed ; the water seeped in, and we could do nothing about it. Through a night of storm and snow-squall fury we were huddled on the poop, not certain that the ship would live to see the morning. When the morning came one of the boys was swept overboard by a big sea. What could we do ? Many had gone like that, and the wind ships could only run on. . . .

But the wind was a little quieter then. We did not run on, though it seemed futile to try to save him. We jammed the wheel hard down and brought her shivering and groaning into the wind. We rove off new ropes into the lifeboat tackle blocks with mad speed ; one of us was aloft in the mizen-top, seeing where the floating figure had gone. It was coming on nightfall then, with rain-squalls and gale in the offing. We saw he had grasped a lifebuoy flung to him, and still lived. But for how long ?

We got the boat over and six volunteers quickly leaped into it, the mate in charge. Nobody was asked to go, nobody hung back.

We dropped astern and the boat seemed a futile thing, rising and falling in those big seas. It was queer to see the green bottom of the old ship, when we rose on a crest, lifted almost bodily from the swirling water. When we dropped in a trough her royal yards swept wild areas through the grey sky, and we saw little else. Soon we could not see her at all, when the boat sank deep in the valleys between the huge seas. We had no idea where the boy was now. We could not see him. How could we ? We could see nothing there, not even the ship. Maybe it was madness to look.

We pulled this way and that hopelessly ; yet we could not go back. It began to rain heavily. None of us had oilskins. Frenchman was in his underpants, just as he had come from his bunk. (It was our watch below.) Sjoberg, from Helsingfors, had been laid up with neuralgia. But now he pulled at his oar, coatless, wet through, hungry, and tired, yet not noticing any of these things and intent only on the saving of this second life. We did not want to lose one more. One was enough to give to Cape Horn—more than enough.

The mate, at the steering oar in the stern, swept the sea with his sharp eyes this way and that. There was a chance that we could not find the ship again if the squall came down

heavily and shut her out. That had happened with the Swedish bark *Staut*, in much the same circumstances. She put out a boat to save a man fallen from the mainyard, and a squall came down and she lost everybody—man overboard, those who went to rescue him, boat and everything. We remembered that. There was nothing in the boat to sustain life. We had thrown the water-casks and bread-barrel out to make room and to decrease the weight of the boat.

Then in the last moment of light we saw him ! It was a sea-miracle, if ever there was one. He was only three crests away from us ! We had been on the point of giving up. . . . We lay to heartily and soon had the boy back on board. We pulled him over the stern and went back to the ship, which had been watching us and now ran slowly down-wind towards us. The boy was unconscious and nearly frozen to death, but he lived. He was amongst the lucky ones.

A few days afterwards we were round the Horn, and immediately the temperature rose about twenty degrees and our spirits rose with it. In reality we ran into a nasty snowstorm off the Falkland Islands which was every bit as bad as anything the Pacific side of the Horn had given us. But we were in the Atlantic then and did not mind. Blow on, old gale ! We did not mind. We knew then that we should quickly come to warmer latitudes, and south-east trades, and so to the north-east trades, the Azores, and then home . . . But we did not count upon home too much just then. . . .

We took advantage of the Cape Horn currents to pass between the Falklands and the mainland of South America, which is an unusual way for sailing ships to take. Once past the Horn we made good progress ; it seemed that the Pacific had wreaked the ocean's wrath on us and delivered us to the Atlantic with the gruff greeting : " Here, these dogs have had enough. Treat them well."

We were glad, and as the days and the weeks slipped by, came to forget a little what had happened earlier in the voyage. But the sea was not done with us yet.

The second mate went mad with awful suddenness. We had no warning of it. We did not expect anything like that.

We knew that he had worried much over Walker's death, since he was officer of the watch. But it was not his fault. It was not any one's fault. It was just one of those terrible inexplicable things that are always happening, yet never seem to remove from this earth persons that might well be done without. In the fo'c'sle we worried much, too, but we had

each other for company. There is no one more lonely than an officer of a sailing ship. We carried only two, first mate and second. They were rarely company for each other, for when one had the deck the other slept. The captain, as in the sailor's style, kept to himself, and spoke to the sailmaker for company. The mates led lonely lives, finding what companionship they could in their own minds. The result was that when something came to unhinge the mind of our second mate, there was none to see how perilously near he was to breaking down. Nobody noticed until it was too late. . .

We had an awful time with him. About that I would have little to say. It was not his fault, poor devil. We were all very sorry for him. We had to keep constant watch on him for the rest of the voyage, lest he do himself harm. He tried to kill himself three times. It was very worrying. We tried to make for Cape Town to put him aboard some steamer we should see there in the shipping lanes, but the wind changed and we could not make Cape Town. We saw no other ships. We were 104 days at sea before we saw the sign of a steamer, and then it was only a smudge of smoke on the horizon. The sailing ship goes her own way about the world, far from the shipping lanes and away from the busy routes of steamers. She may see other sailing ships, but rarely, until she reaches the shipping lanes of the North Atlantic, anything of steamers.

We found the south-east trades and went up the line. Now the days were pleasant and the sun shone, and flying-fish leapt in fear from the bone of foam under our forefoot. We saw some whales ; one of them stayed with us three days. He was not frightened. We had no propeller nor honking engines to frighten him away. He played about us merrily, and when I tried to photograph him, blew spray on the lens.

On the hundredth day we came to the line. Here it fell calm, and we made little progress. We were lucky though ; once I spent three weeks in the Atlantic doldrums, in a big four-master bound from Melbourne to St. Nazaire. In the *Grace Harwar* we were becalmed only four days, which was nothing. Then the wind came again and we sneaked slowly on.

By then the ship was very foul ; her top speed, with a strong wind, was a little more than seven knots, and more in favourable conditions. But she had not been in a dry dock for over two years, and her bottom was very foul. She had lain long months at anchorage on west coast ports, and in Luderitz Bay in south-west Africa. There are no places worse for fouling ships and fouled ships cannot sail.



Another worry now beset us. We were short of food. We had never had too much. Now as the days passed each took with it the last of some item or other of our small sea-stock—now it was the last rice, the last margarine, the last sugar, the last smoked beef, the last peas. We soon had little but some rather bad potatoes, black sugarless and milkless coffee, and a little bread. There was a small pig which we had been keeping to kill in the last emergency. Here it was. We killed it, only to find that it was diseased and could not be eaten. Maddening discovery! We ate a little, risking it, and soon became violently ill. Still we would not throw the bad carcass into the sea. We put it in a cask beneath the fo'c'sle head, fearful to throw it overboard lest we were left with nothing at all.

It was now imperative that we should see a steamer quickly and get some food. We saw no steamers for a week, though we were creeping steadily into the North Atlantic, which was their stronghold. Then we saw a few; a big passenger ship going down to Buenos Aires in the early morning mist. I do not believe a soul on that ship saw us. She was a long way away, and she did not come closer. We saw others later and ran up signal flags asking them to stop. They took no notice. They could not see our signal flags, lying stagnant in the calm. We had no other means of attracting their attention.

It was not until four months had passed from the beginning of our voyage that we received some food. It was on the night of the 123rd day at sea when the Scots steamer *Orange Leaf*, bound to Trinidad, came into sight. We signalled her with a flash-lamp the captain had, and she stopped, telling us to put out a boat and come across. We put out the boat and pulled over about half a mile of greasily heaving sea to where she was hove to.

Being a Scotsman, she gave all she had.

The name of the *Orange Leaf* was indeed blessed amongst us.

She gave us cases of smoked beef, half a cow from her refrigerator, a case of milk, flour, and fresh vegetables, together with a sack of sugar and some other things. She gave us tobacco, but it was real strong sea-stuff—plugs—and our young boys could not smoke it because it was too strong.

A day or so after meeting the *Orange Leaf* we came past the Azores, still with winds that were sometimes good and sometimes baffling. Fifteen days after that meeting we lay at anchor in Queenstown Harbour, Ireland. I was never more pleased to come to a voyage end.

At last I could send a cable to poor Walker's parents and let them know their son was dead. He had been dead three months and more then—a hundred days—and they did not know anything about it. But the newspapers got the story home to Australia quicker than I could, and the first his parents knew of it was a grim paragraph in a paper.

From Queenstown we towed round to Glasgow, and there I left. No one in the ship went back to her. Another crew of young boys came across from Finland, sent by the owner there, and with them a young man as master who had been with me in the *Lawhill* as able seaman eight years before.

The grain was discharged, the ship went down to the Bristol Channel, and loaded coal for La Guaira, in British Guiana. She had reached that port after a wild passage of some forty-five days, intending then to go on through Panama to Peru for guano, or across the South Atlantic and so to Australia for grain. But world freight markets collapsed, and all that she could do was to return again to Mariehamn, Finland, in ballast, there to lie in wait at anchorage, with only a watchman aboard, for the upward trend in Australian grain freights or a good offer from the break-up yards—and the end. . . .

The real sea film was made. That part of the adventure was satisfactory. The 6000 feet of negative developed with 98 per cent. perfection, which was an act of God in no way due to me, except that my ignorance—not always a bad thing, at least in comparison with a little knowledge—helped me. When Ronald died we had exposed some 6000 feet of film. I was half inclined to throw cameras and film over the side there and then. What did I know about them? How could I carry on? I didn't even know how to load the cameras.

But I went on, not with hope, but because it seemed the only thing to do. There was no sense in giving in without a trial. I taught myself to load the magazines, using for the first few a red light (which would have spoiled panchromatic film) made up from folds of red bunting lashed round a hurricane lamp. I had an idea of the different exposures necessary in the various lights, from watching Walker at work. I could guess what would make a good picture. The ship helped me in that respect; wherever I pointed the camera I could not help but have perfect composition. All her angles were lovely; every scene she showed was beautiful. The sea helped me with the light. It was generally good.

So I went on with the job for a hundred days, not knowing

even whether the cameras were working properly, half afraid that they were not, afraid the film wasn't keeping (much of it was panchromatic and not guaranteed), not a laboratory or dark room did we have, no cool film tanks for the tropics.

When at last I reached Glasgow I had half a mind to throw the film off the dock. We went ashore the first night and found that the talkies had come. The days of silent film, which were standard when the *Grace Harwar* sailed, were dead. The negative I had was silent. I didn't know then how much of sound could be faked. I had spent all I had and all that I could borrow; Walker had risked everything and lost his life. I had no idea what the film would be like and had pretty well given it up for a total loss when Walker had died. I had never counted on its being good.

I knew that I had 250 dollars to collect from a publisher in London: this amount would just pay for the development of the negative. But if I had the negative developed I would be broke. I had no job. The film was probably no good. What then? There was nowhere else to get any money.

I risked it. I spent the 250 dollars, and had the negative developed. It would cost, I was told, another 500 dollars for a print. I did not have the 500 dollars and I never saw the print. The negative, however, was good; I set about the forlorn task of trying to interest some one in it, of getting some producing firm to make, from that basis, the final picture—the picture that Ronald Walker and I had set out to make. It was to be a simple real picture of sailing ships and the sea, without story, without sex, without fake; we had always thought the subject lovely and stirring enough without false additions. There are enough pictures faked.

That picture was never made! I hawked the film about in London for months, up and down Wardour Street, in Soho, the heart of London's executive film-land.

There was, I found, no machinery for the marketing of such a film as I had brought. Film-producing concerns did not want outsiders—and amateurs at that—to bring them in completed negatives, no matter how good they might be. They wanted to make them for themselves, no matter how bad they might be.

I tramped up and down in Wardour Street in dejection. I thought of going to America, but did not have the funds. There was a lot of gush in the British newspapers about the excellence, the world-dominating chance, of British films. I learnt nothing to impress me with the truth of these optimistic

statements. I learnt only how the producing companies feared the unusual and what had not been tried before ; how deep-rooted was their terror of anything that did not happen to be the fashion of the moment. Crime films ? If one company made a crime film that succeeded, then they all rushed to make similar " masterpieces " that differed so little that the public soon tired of them. Historical plots ? Newspaper heroes ? We have seen them all. . . . I suppose that American producers aren't much better, but, from a showman's point of view, they turn out a better job. . . .

My adventures in trying to dispose of the film were more harrowing than those of the *Grace Harwar* in getting it.

I got into the hands of some promoters who talked a lot, said little, had a huge office, and never did anything. They said they were going to exploit the film. They made a print, at last I saw what Walker and I had done. Here was the raw material for a real film ! But no one could see it. By the grace of God we had fluked a grand sea picture ; by the stupidity of man the public never saw it.

After a while my promoters had a film trade row. They split. My film went with half of them. I lost track of them for a while. It didn't matter much ; I was pretty well fed up by then. I had no capital for producing the film by myself, and had no way of getting any. I knew nobody in the film world. . . . The film was aground in Wardour Street, and it didn't look as if it would ever be floated again.

But at last a British firm did become interested in it. They liked the negative and appreciated the beauty of the sea part. They acquired it, and set about the discovery of some way of making it into what they considered to be a box-office picture. They brought England's poet laureate, John Masefield, to their studio to see the film, and he was much impressed. It would have fitted splendidly into a film version of his famous " Dauber."

After a long time they hit upon a story. They made interior sets of fo'c'sle and cabin in their studios. Here the dialogue sequences were made. They did not do so bad a job. They called the resultant film—one-third real and two-thirds fake—*Windjammer*. The director, who had never heard of the film until it was brought to him, put his name in letters a yard high on a title-sheet to himself ; Walker's name, incorrectly initialled, was grouped with mine, in very small letters, together with the men who had done the studio photography, as the " photographers " on a title-sheet along with all those other

persons who, for some mysterious reason, had to be given "credits." Well, the director could have his glory. . . .

Afterwards the film was sent out to the movie houses, many of whose managers were afraid to book it because it had no theme song, and there was no woman in the story.

# TOLEDO UNDER FIRE

By

JOHN LANGDON-DAVIES

*This account of Toledo in the summer of 1936 was written by a newspaper correspondent who travelling through Spain gave a graphic description of the process of the civil war. It is reprinted here just as the story of a man who took his life in his hands in order "to see things for himself."*

I HAD been told that the War Office would give me every facility that I needed in Toledo, and that I had only to go and get a car and an escort, and be off. That was not literally true: there turned out to be formalities, and nobody seemed to know the official in charge of foreign correspondents. When I ran him to earth he presented me with a long list of names, and asked if mine was among them. It was not; but what intrigued me was that this document was, or ought to have been, somewhat private, for against the names of my Press colleagues were annotations. Against most of them, I am glad to say, was written "*bueno*" or "*muy bueno*," but against some there was the warning "*muy cuidado*."

A certain correspondent had made me a little cross by reason of the number of nuns he had seen from his aeroplane stripped naked and made to dance to the mob. I was glad to see that "*muy cuidado*" was against his name. "Oh yes," said the official, "we have to be very careful of foreign correspondents," and to show how careful, he ran down the list with me. "By the way," he added, "your name is not here?" I wondered what he would do if I had claimed to be X with "*muy cuidado*" underlined in the margin. The simple trust of all Spaniards whatsoever may not make for efficiency, but it is nicer than the ingrown insolence of officials in certain other parts of the world.

When I got my car I was thankful to find that its vintage wellnigh secured me against any wish of the driver to break records. My nerves had been shattered in Barcelona ; I was perfectly prepared to face a certain amount of misdirected rifle-firing on the safe side of Toledo streets, but experience made me fear the journey. We went at a steady thirty miles an hour along the splendid road over which King Alfonso had so often speeded, and I was able to let my imagination wander over the scenery.

At all times of the year the central plains of Spain are deceptive ; now in August you would think them a ruthless desert incapable of growing anything. But for the huge golden piles of straw at the threshing floors, it was impossible to believe that the cripple villages could get bread from these stones. And in May, when I travelled the same road, you would have believed yourself in a rich granary and an Elysian field of flowers. The sun gives and the sun takes away ; May comes to less than it seems to offer, but August paints the landscape with too grim a palette. If only there were trees.

The driver and the armed guard are not communicative. I do not know if they are soured by experiences with other foreign correspondents, but they assume that I cannot speak a word of Spanish. This idea they convey to the barricades, and save for a mechanical Popular Front salute, I give no sign of life until in a distant hollow below us Toledo comes into view. But within me I am thinking of the Marquis ; of the golden age in which most Spaniards believe, before the trees had been cut down by the Arabs, or the Carlists, or the French, or the Goths ; of the amazing effect of a little water in a dry land ; of how the French soldiers must have felt trudging these alien wastes in 1810 ; of how the soldiers of the Great War, after experiencing horror and fatigue in half a dozen countries, came back, apparently unchanged by all that had happened, to sell milk in Devonshire or to mind a machine.

Toledo was dim in the hollow ; a dull brown in a dull brown haze ; the four-square citadel, the Alcazar, dominated it from the very first glimpse. We stopped to take photographs.

The Alcazar stood up amid the huddle of houses. On the left was the smoke from a small battery in government hands on the other side of the river ; on the right was the smoke of the nearest cottages to the Alcazar, set on fire the previous night by the rebels. To me at least it seemed fantastic that

men should be working in the fields in the foreground, creating new food to sustain life, and that in the hazy background men were busy with death. To the right of the Alcazar you can see the Cathedral, while immediately below it and a little to the right is the arms-factory.

When, on 18th July, the preparations for the revolt were completed, the Guardia Civil, gathered from every town and village in the province, went down to the arms-factory with six motor-lorries and informed the old gentleman in charge that they were taking the whole store of munitions up to the Alcazar.

"Oh, but I forbid it," said the aged commanding officer.

"We insist," they replied.

"Well, I can do nothing," he said, and by so saying probably forfeited his life. If he has not been shot already he is certainly in prison for complicity in the revolt, and his career is at an end. Poor old man ! How little there is to save us from fatal mistakes when daily life has become uprooted. I can picture the sort of man he must be, this officer commanding the arms-factory of Toledo : too fat, bespectacled, thick-set, not dignified in spite of an unsmiling face ; he cared for nothing provided he could sit sufficiently long over his coffee to digest a newspaper and a meal. And then six motor-lorries arrived ; a rebellion ; almost bound to be successful ; and in any case how could he resist ; and so he is in prison, unshaven, with no newspapers, wretched coffee. And in the Alcazar they have three million rounds of rifle ammunition, scarcely any water, nothing to do except shoot at the walls opposite and hope that the Moors will come in time.

Now we have come nearer ; the houses stand out in greater detail. All those low houses surrounding the great building are full of militiamen, their wives and children ; an armed city waiting, while inside the Alcazar between one and two thousand human beings wait also.

Horrible stories have floated out from the doomed rebels : there are known to be loyal soldiers among them, caught in a trap. I can just hear the rattle of machine guns as I twist the spool in my camera ; they say that the rebel officers lean the machine guns on the shoulders of the loyal soldiers, after forcing them to the windows, so that if answering fire comes from the roofs and streets of the city it is a loyalist who receives the bullet ; they say that in there three women have given birth to three infants and that all were born dead—lucky innocents ; they say that they are feeding on horseflesh and



half a pint of water a day, unless, that is, they are able to get water by stealth from the nearest houses at night.

Ahead of me the main road winds into the city ; I have often driven that way, but to-day I mustn't do so. I can see the sandbags half across the road on the extreme right. From that point on the road is near enough to the Alcazar to make the firing inconvenient, so we are going to edge the car under the bags and proceed across waste ground beneath the protection of those cottages.

I cannot believe what they tell me : I look at the triangular danger-signal by the side of the road ; set up no doubt by the Spanish Tourist interests to show how careful we are in Spain, how civilised, how able to look after our foreign visitors who come to spend money and to see the El Grecos. In normal times I should go up that road, slowing down at the sign, and after passing the gate find myself in the Plaza de Zocodover surrounded by touts and amateur cicerones. Indeed, I remember losing my temper in the Plaza de Zocodover only a few years back and telling a persistent youth that he could go to hell before I would let him lead me to the Cathedral, the Casa del Greco, the synagogue, or any hotel whatsoever. It had spoiled my cup of coffee beneath the arches of the Plaza de Zocodover.

Now I found myself edging off to the right, skulking behind sandbags, glancing back at the Alcazar from which I could see little spurts of smoke. They looked like the splashes of raindrops on a misty lake. It seemed incredible that a woman was hanging up linen to dry ; that a little boy, in spite of a notice forbidding any one "*hacer aguas mayores ó menores*," was doing just that ; functions, social or natural, cannot be held up because a few million rounds of rifle cartridges have to be blown off somehow before death comes to twelve hundred men.

We reached the city gate ; a mediaeval, solid affair, kept, one had always supposed, for tourists, and yet how real and useful it looked to-day. The large Ministry of War placard on our car does not save us from a thorough search from several enthusiasts, a part of the Army in Overalls, the guardians of the gate of Toledo in 1936 ; descendants of the men who shut this very gate in the king's face and then sniped at him from the walls. They are guarding the gate through which, if the twelve hundred rebels in the Alcazar are ever to escape alive, must come the descendants of those very Moors whom Isabella, mother of Toledo's royal child, Crazy Jane, expelled

from Spain nearly five hundred years ago. For every night the inmates of the Alcazar tune in their wireless sets and to them through the three meter thick walls come stories of fascist victories, of columns coming to relieve them, of the fall of Madrid ; hunger and sickness whisper in one ear "surrender," the ether waves whisper into the other promises of rescue.

We pass through the gate and begin to climb that road all tourists know past the Gate "with Moorish influence," bearing left until the Zocodover Square is reached. But to-day we do not reach the Zocodover Square ; at the farthest corner we once more meet sandbags but for which we should be under fire from the overhanging Alcazar. Militiamen are lying on mattresses beneath the shadow of a dram-shop wall. An old woman milks a goat, thus calling attention to Nature's ugliest effort at designing breasts. We are told to swerve to the right and wedge the car into an absurd crack of a road as steep as a cliff path.

I have a letter to the captain of Militia. Paco gave it to me. Paco and the captain were prison companions, having been shut up together after October. Helped by militiamen of every sort we reach a barracks, where the captain's adjutant volunteers to take me to the captain.

We find the captain sitting in a broken arm-chair under a canopy spread across one of those inner patios that always make me wish to be a Spanish householder. He reads my letter, which tells him that I am everything that is most desirable and that I am to be shown anything that I may desire to see. "Yes," he says, "but first let us have dinner."

The captain is an excellent specimen of *l'homme moyen sensuel* ; quite like a movie star. I do not know the stars in private life, but I imagine them to be more body than mind, healthy, slow-moving, and inclined to enjoy an arm-chair. This man gives out an air of huge but casual enjoyment of his physical existence, the sort of enjoyment that I rise to only occasionally on a hot day while bathing in a warm sea. He has the kind of eyes that best-seller writers have broken many typewriters trying to describe ; usually with the help of the epithet "hot." The kind of eyes that women, they say, find effective : insolent eyes. In sober truth, I think that his eyes look as if they have successfully staved off a slight cold only the day before yesterday or may possibly have to be treated with boric acid in a day or two. Very handsome eyes, in fact, attractively half extinguished, like a room which looks better by firelight.

Dinner was a long time coming, and the wait was embarrassing. I could not fail to see that the captain was very shy of me. He found it hard to make conversation. Moreover, from the top story, just beneath the canopy, now on one side, now on another of the inner square, popped girls' heads staring down on me and the captain. By the time we sat down at table I had lost my Castilian and, though nobody knew it, my English too. I suppose they were all daughters of the house in which the militia officers were billeted. I found myself in the unpleasant position of making a table of fifteen adults so shy by my mere presence that nobody talked. We stared at our plates and ate beans. I thought it incongruous to be so shy in a city where they were killing one another.

Dinner over, we sat in the patio. My chair was so broken that I feared a landslide, but I did not like to call attention to it. The girls sat and stared, chiefly at the captain. Orderlies came in with papers to be signed. And still we sat, and would be sitting yet had I not broken the intolerable mass timidity by taking everybody's photograph. More by luck than cunning I took them standing, and the new position seemed to remind the captain that I wanted to see the town.

First, we climbed on the roof of the barracks. The captain and I were bare-headed; his hair, dark and straight, was combed back and shone with, I suppose, a subdued insolence. The other officer was wearing a forage cap which on emerging on the roof he carefully removed. Apparently snipers were more ready to leave bare heads alone.

"You must keep your head well down," said the captain, and we edged round a parapet into full view of the rebel citadel.

A constant, though irregular, crackle of rifle-fire came from their direction across the faded vermillion roofs of the thickset city. Immediately in front of me the smoke I had seen in the morning still rose from the burning cottages. To the right towered the Cathedral spire beneath which, locked up and deserted, lay Juan de Mena's San Francisco and El Greco's Espolio. And ever as I dodged along behind the captain I kept thinking to myself that the Count of Orgaz was lying amid the flame-like hands beneath these very roofs over which men were shooting. Crawling catlike over the roof, the captain was in his element; we began to like one another, and so I turned my back on the Alcazar and took his photograph with a clothes-line across his mouth, a convent with a Red Cross flag as a background, and the crackle of rifles dimly in the distance.

Immediately beneath us as we clambered across the roof there lay a tangle of human tragedy, sordid and insignificant except to the two or three people concerned. We climbed down one flight to find ourselves in its midst. A long corridor with many cell-like rooms giving off from it. Near the door piles of old mattresses on which militiamen and some girls lay resting, with that unattractive appearance that no one can avoid who has been for several days sleeping at odd moments in his clothes. Pasted on the doorpost was a brief notice forbidding entrance ; it was signed " By order of the Cheka." Here were the detention rooms of the militia secret police ; the sordid reality, so often written up in accounts of the " Terror." One expects horrible dungeons, torture chambers, ruthless mechanical efficiency meting out secret punishment ; one finds a corridor with the paint scratched, doors with frosted glass tops, old mattresses, tiredness. The captain stood silently taking it all in. His impassive face certainly showed no blood lust, no anger, no purging energy even ; he was content to take it all in with a sleepy intensity.

A door opened ; a young militiaman armed with rifle and bayonet, his feet in rope-soled canvas shoes, strolled out with two young men who had asked to be taken to a lavatory. Two prisoners of the Cheka. The captain stared at them, not with hate or anger, but with his usual impassivity. One felt that he never had any particular emotion unless it was needed for a specific action. He had nothing to do with these prisoners, not then at least, and so he stared at them without feeling. They disappeared behind a door ; the captain turned and looked at me with exactly the same expression. " Fascists," he said quietly. A sleepy girl buried her face in another lump of mattress.

As the men passed me slowly I saw more of them. Young men in the early twenties ; they, too, had been several nights in their clothes. They had neither collars, nor ties, nor shoelaces ; they were unshaven, heavy-eyed, grey. They strolled very slowly back along the corridor, dispirited, lethargic. Nobody ill-treated them, nor would they do so ; they would simply be shot in due course ; and when the militia made up their mind to shoot them, it would be, as much as for any other reason, to break the intolerable tension, the shyness of having to do with these specimens of another race of animal.

For a moment, as they passed, I saw one of them side by side with the captain. Considering them as two animals at the Zoo, the one in fine feather, the other mangy, I could not help

thinking how easily their attractiveness could have been reversed. If the Moors could be brought to Toledo to slaughter half the town, then the captain would be unshaven, grey, heavy-eyed ; and his prisoner, after a face massage and a visit to the tailor, would once more be a *senorito*, a leader of Toledo's smart set, with a racing car and a *querida*, and as much physical beauty as the captain.

The noble qualities are only skin deep. In war-time your propagandist waits until your enemy has had to sleep in his clothes and remain unshaven and then photographs him next to your well-groomed self—beauty and the beast. No more need to wonder on which side justice lies, for God is always on the side of the Beauty Parlour.

The captain turned his head slowly, and followed their retreating forms up the corridor, but he made no comment and betrayed no feelings.

What would I like to do next ?

" I would like to get nearer the Alcazar."

" There are some barricades very near the Alcazar ; perhaps you would like to go there."

We walked downstairs to the street ; but before we left the barracks we went and stood in what had been the barracks chapel. Uncouth mattresses lay along the floor and a few slightly sick young militiamen sprawled on them. Near the door a confessional turned on its side had been improvised into a sort of box office, and an orderly was writing out passes. I looked at it and smiled. The captain looked at me looking, and smiled also, and then to my astonishment he made a comment :

" What sadness has been produced in that box ! " he said. It was the first time he had volunteered an opinion on anything, and as he spoke he stared at the confessional in a way that made me suspicious. This man of action, apparently without feeling, certainly without desire to express feeling, was he not living a life of intense contemplativeness ? He was like an artist at a picture gallery ; he was approaching every experience that his eyes gave him with the humility of a mystic. He was an El Greco who could not paint ; a primitive using action as a medium. El Greco would have brought out that look which I had just caught only by accident.

Young men came up to him and asked questions. These men who are described as sexually attractive always turn out to be worshipped by their own sex.

We walked uphill into what had once been the Archbishop's Street, but had become, early in the Republic, the Street of

Carlos Marx. For some reason the Gil Robles régime forgot to change the name back again, and no one had ever tampered with Trinity Street; so there at one corner Carlos Marx and the Trinity share a corner stone. Here is the meeting-place. Below the name-plate of Trinity Street you can read: "Stick no Bills"; below that they have stuck a recruiting poster, "Enlist in the Fifth Regiment"; next to it is something about the "Fascist Canaille"; and next that is a Spanish Red Cross notice. And in Carlos Marx Street, beneath the ancient Archbishop's Palace, is a militia woman in full uniform of overalls, rifle in hand, scarlet scarf about her neck. "Are you sure you got me in your photo, comrade?" she says.

Carlos Marx Street has the Archbishop's palace on one side and the Cathedral on the other. We stood beneath the walls of the latter and watched a line of women outside a soup kitchen lower down. Another officer joined us.

"An English journalist," the captain explained, and before I knew what was happening we had plunged into a rapid discussion of the Spanish temperament. The newcomer was explaining why Spain would never be communist. The Spanish temperament was anarchist and individualist. I would remember how in *Don Quixote*—how by making Sancho Panza say so-and-so, Cervantes was—Moreover, the whole Castillian history. . . . Hermandados. . . Regionalism. . . . Individualism. . . . the Spanish Ego. The captain nodded from time to time, watching the effect of this new barrage upon me. Presently I noticed how constantly rifle bullets seemed to be sailing somewhere overhead. It made me unable to concentrate on the Spanish character. The captain saw that too. He would never have noticed the rifle bullets but for the expression on my face.

"We are nearer the Alcazar," he said. "Do you see that rope?" I saw a rope stretched triangularly across the opposite side of the road. It had once been supported a few feet above the ground by a post knocked into the cobbled surface; but that had fallen down and no one had bothered to put it up again.

"Put your head the other side of the rope," said the captain, "and look up there," pointing—"but draw your head back very quickly."

I did so. Towering above me a hundred and fifty yards or so away was the grey wall of the Alcazar wreathed in little gusts of smoke. The rope was a warning that that side of the road was within death's reach.

On the other side we had talked safely of Quixote ; women had passed us screening their faces from the sun with paper fans. " Last week," said the captain, " a little girl, nine years old, was playing here with a ball. It rolled beyond that rope and she followed it. A sniper got her through both cheeks."

We said good-bye to the Cervantist and turned the Cathedral corner.

We were now approaching the burning houses I had seen from a distance in the morning ; but it was absolutely impossible to remember that behind them loomed the Alcazar at a very few yards' distance unless one was constantly reminded of the fact. Life was so normal everywhere : a line of women bargaining about milk ; the milkman and his donkey cart ; the donkey half asleep, whisking his tail against his hereditary enemies, the flies ; three little girls skipping ; a boy of two sitting on the edge of the pavement, his head shaved close to cheat the insects, playing with a sardine tin and a broken spoon ; an old woman on a balcony emptying heaven knows what liquid into the middle of the road ; window-boxes of carnations. At the top of the road one saw a group of men clustered near an improvised shelter of logs straddling the narrow street.

" You must be careful now," said the captain ; " we are very close, and at some places the streets are under fire. Then we must hurry." The shelter was built across the road at its juncture with a narrow side lane, leading straight up to the Alcazar, from which hand grenades could be thrown. The end of the lane was packed with sandbags in which an occasional bullet could be heard embedding itself. A man stood there leaning on his rifle. His rifle is stuck between the sandbags, and the enemy are forty yards from its other end. Between is no-man's-land, the restricted, concentrated no-man's-land of street warfare.

I climb up on the sacks and raise myself for a moment above them ; immediately ahead are the burnt-out shells of cottages still smoking, and beyond them, through what were once their windows, I see again, but very near now, the besieged fortress.

The noise is irritating ; a constant ricochet of bullets coming I knew not whence, going I knew not whither. I raised my arms fully above my head to discharge my camera right into no-man's-land ; a cheerful militiaman hidden behind a window three yards above me, bent on adding to the confusion, began shooting bullets at the opposite wall nine feet away, and my hands trembled violently. A laugh

broke out from the barricade below: "Ha! Ha! Look, there is an Englishman who is frightened." I turned round and explained that I had always been sensitive to noise, and to show them how brave I was, took deliberate aim once more at no-man's-land.

Now we continue our journey to the next barricade a few yards up the street. We are going parallel to the whole length of the Alcazar; every lane to the left leads straight past the smoking houses to its foot.

We are looking back to the platform lower down the road. Above it is the street sign. Immediately in front of the barricade the road widens out and comes once more under the direct fire. To the left is a side-street leading to the Alcazar, and across it is barbed wire; almost all this space is swept by rifle-bullets and at any moment a sortie may be made down it; but only to be caught in a cross-fire from this barricade and the next and last.

In spite of his proximity to all this activity Jesus Palencia has kept his shop open at the corner of X. street. He is a grocer, and I expect that many of the cans thrown out into no-man's-land came from him. The captain says we must cross a ten yards' strip exposed to point-blank fire.

"Now," said the captain, "I will cross first; then you must count ten and follow. If you come at once you may get the bullets meant for me." He ran; not very fast; his arm bent over his head, nicely exposing his heart, when you come to think of it; but who does not instinctively protect head rather than heart. In the very middle of his stride he paused and gazed up at the Alcazar, with the same deliberate, insolent stare, like a man at a show who has paid and expects to be amused, but has not been amused yet. As he turns round on the other side of the danger zone, three sharp cracks ring out, three rifle-bullets embed themselves in the opposite wall. I have counted ten and follow, trying hard not to run fast enough to make the watchers laugh. Three more cracks and bullets follow me; and the captain stares silently at the wall opposite, where pock marks tell of a month of this sort of thing.

Now we have reached the most advanced barricade of all, beyond which it is quite impossible to go. In front is the Alcazar. Each rifle is aimed directly at the enemy's position. In the most advanced trench at Toledo were three German anti-fascists, two men and one girl.

The arrival of an Englishman seemed to complete the



international front, for though I had nothing more lethal than a camera, the very presence of another foreign sympathiser was almost like new stores of ammunition. We cheered the anti-fascist cause and damned the fascists so loudly, that the captain raised his voice. "Less noise," he said. "Why attract hand grenades?" and as he said it we were treated to a more vigorous outburst of rifle-firing accompanied by the impotent spatter of a machine gun. Three million rounds of rifle ammunition and nothing to do before dying but shoot them off.

But it is time to think of the men and women and children entrenched within the Alcazar. Who are they and why are they there? There are some hundreds of rebel *guardias civiles*, officers, and cadets; besides these there are perhaps two hundred fascists properly so-called, rich local capitalists and implicated priests who fled to the Alcazar for refuge. There are a number of soldiers, many of them loyal and unwillingly caught up in a situation that is none of their making, and there are women and children—wives, some of them, of rebels, others of entrapped loyalists.

Horrible stories get out of the life within. A few soldiers, protesting loyalty, have escaped to the barricades; some have let themselves down by sheets and ropes into the river; some have committed suicide. You will find the same company in Teruel and in Cordoba, a group of rebels who miscalculated their strength, who hoped to gain the day by one sudden act of treachery and who are left to face nothing but punishment. The officers, they say, are keeping their spirits up with drugs from the chemist's shop. Every day as more masonry is torn away, more people must cluster in the cellars. Nobody knows what they are eating. They are the last fragments of age-long despotisms starving to death.

If only some one could write their history; how as the days of futile agony pass on some have grown cruel and others religious; some have grown beards, and others have kept themselves as clean-shaven and dapper as if there was an alternative to lingering death; the stealthy hunting of women; the mothers watching their children; wondering if to-morrow there will still be a thin drop of nourishment to be squeezed from their starved breasts; the children still thinking of new games, playing fascists versus reds no doubt. Some souls are growing daily more noble beneath the strain, others are cracked and go squeaking, like bats, to hell.

Wives are finding themselves pregnant without any possi-

bility of their coming to full term ; some hardened minds without illusions seek whimsical ways of making the last hours of life tolerable ; others persistently hope and expect General Franco to come with Moors to their help. One can imagine them clustering round the loud-speaker, listening to the drunken Queipo de Llano in Seville. Can his filthy jokes make them laugh ? What does make them laugh ? Do they argue and find good reasons for disbelieving all the government wireless station says ? Probably they believe that General Mola has already marched down the Paseo del Prado, or at least they are persuaded that next Thursday, or even next Wednesday, he will be there ; and then, quite soon, a *paella*, maybe a rice with chicken in it, followed by coffee and a liqueur.

Certainly they believe that every nun in Toledo has been raped ; that Moscow gold paves the hostile streets around them ; that the militiamen have robbed and slaughtered ; that they themselves are crusaders. What on earth do they not in their feverish state confess to the priests ? And some are promising themselves a life of purity if they ever get out, others a visit to the nearest brothel.

"Now proceed," says the best of guides, Richard Ford, "to the Zocodover, 'the square market,' a name which, to readers of *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Cervantes*, recalls the haunts of rogues and of those proud and poor Don Whiskerandos who swaggered and starved with their *capas y espadas*. *Suk* in Arabic, *Zoco* in Spanish, and *Soke* in English, signify a 'market place,' and a vicinity to cathedrals ; for while commerce and religion went hand in hand, the shrine attracted multitudes and 'money-changers,' while the sanctity protected the cash. This *plaza* is most Moorish, with its irregular windows, balconies, blacksmiths, and picturesque peasantry, and in summer evenings is a fashionable promenade. It was for years the site of national sports of fire and blood, of the auto-da-fé and the bull-fight ; it was planted in 1840."

Here is the Plaza de Zocodover to-day ; not one stone lies upon another ; between the camera and the ruins all the ground is swept by fire from the Alcazar ; to our left a huge barricade of sandbags is waiting to be occupied in an emergency, for that way lies the one chance of a sortie from the fortress and out of the city. Suppose the rebels made a desperate sally they would race for the Plaza and hurl themselves upon that barricade, but as they did so they would be machine-gunned. Most

of the gunners are *guardias de asalto*, trained men, for this is a vital position, and mere bravery and enthusiasm are not enough. On their left is an armoured car of an amateurish and doubtful design : it has been hastily constructed by the men in the steel industries, and it would not commend itself to a mechanised army expert. Just to the right is an enormous gramophone, a lethal weapon to the man with a sensitive ear, filling the square with a distorted blare and assuring us against our better judgment that the music goes round and around and comes out here. Immediately behind me as I snap my camera is a thick rope across the road to keep back the general public who stand vaguely like a crowd which has arrived too early, and is not sure whether the game has been put off on account of the weather. Above our heads a constant smack of rifle-bullets followed by little pieces of cement and plaster dislodged and crumbling to the ground. In front of the barricade is a café table lying on its side. One has an irresistible impulse to go and put it on its legs and be shot in doing so. One wonders what has happened to its marble top.

I try hard to visualise what the Plaza de Zocodover was like when last I sat in it, and all I can remember is my own irritation at the touts who wanted to show me round Toledo. When will the next tourist come to Spain ? And from out of the sky suddenly, to everybody's intense surprise, there swoops an enormous aeroplane.

Is it ours or theirs ? Has it come to bomb the Alcazar or to bomb the loyal city ? It hovers above the fortress ; it is Italian ; everybody suddenly knows that. I confess that I have not the slightest idea as to how one tells an Italian aeroplane from one of any other nationality, but I, too, am suddenly certain that this is an Italian. It is trying to drop hams on the Alcazar. Why everybody in twenty seconds knew that it was hams, and not beef or bread or beer, I cannot say ; but we all said that the Italian 'plane was dropping hams for the rebels. Hams of Montanches, no doubt, those juicy, succulent products of the oak forests of Estremadura ; those hams which the Marquis had tried to buy for his plump little daughter. "The fat," says Ford, "when they are properly boiled, looks like melted topazes, and the flavour defies language, although we have dined on one this very day, in order to secure accuracy and inspiration. The flesh of pork, a test of orthodoxy, as being eschewed by Jew and Moslem, enters largely into the national metaphors and stew-

pots. The Montanches hams are superb." And so we all knew that this Italian 'plane came up from Badajoz and the western piggeries was dropping ham for the rebels.

A wave of fury swept through the whole visible world ; rifles, machine guns, anything began to pepper the upper air. I saw a lad of fourteen race to his cottage and run out with a pistol six inches long, and try to cover the intruder ; he could not fire for he had no ammunition. And then with a spatter of machine-gun fire spraying the town the 'plane disappeared as suddenly as it came and within forty-five seconds of its first arrival. Half a minute later everybody knew that two men had been killed as it swept low over the arms-factory. A blanket of talkative indignation covered the little crowds up and down Toledo. An Italian 'plane had come from Badajoz, dropped Montanches hams on the Alcazar, killed two people with machine-gun fire, and disappeared. We all knew that. And yet I do not see how any one had been in a better position to know it than I, and I only knew it because every one else knew it. By the time I had got half-way to Madrid on the return journey the men at the barricade knew that a rebel 'plane had bombed Toledo and all they wanted from us was the details.

Meanwhile in the Alcazar the twenty-eighth night was falling and a meagre supper of garbanzos and mule flesh was being served out. The rebel aeroplane had brought a more valuable thing than probably mythical hams, for now once more hope could lift its aching head. " They will certainly relieve us in a day or two. They are coming up from Badajoz. General Mola will enter Madrid by Sunday. We shall drink coffee in the city in a very few days. We shall go to the cinema and see Shirley Temple. The child will not die after all. The child will be born after all. I wonder if the brothel has been burned . . . "

Two or three days later I was walking down the Gran Via, in Madrid, when a muffled roar from a passing car stopped me. It was followed by the shaggy face of Alvarez del Vayo. " You must get in this car and come with me. "

" But I have an important engagement with Paco. "

" This is more important. The Alcazar is about to surrender, and you will be the only foreign correspondent to know it. "

Del Vayo was not then what he is now—Spain's Foreign Minister—but he was already the power behind the throne, and the ear, the voice, of Largo Caballero. He is one of those

men whom you must forgive, whatever he does, a man without guile, a genial mystic. He wore brown instead of the usual blue overalls, and every day he would be so full of appointments as to be inevitably an hour or two late for all of them. Most afternoons he would drive out to the Sierra to do his bit of fighting, but every now and then he would be so late with his morning appointments that he would have to ring up Paco, to go and do the bit of fighting for him. And although Paco would probably be busy putting his paper to bed, he would have to go.

At this moment del Vayo was extremely excited, to the detriment of his English, which out of courtesy he always insisted on using. But I gathered that I was being whisked off to see Caballero and to take him at once with us to Toledo. At the U.G.T. offices I waited with the stoicism that is necessary when it is a matter of del Vayo, and at last he shot out into the street and into the car and we were off to the Ministry of War. It seemed that two hours ago the rebels in the Alcazar had hung out a white flag.

But it came to nothing at all. As del Vayo said when he emerged once more from the Ministry of War, it was all a little premature. A white flag had been held out from a hole in the wall and a request for a parley made, but when the War Office sent some one post-haste from Madrid, he arrived to find that the white flag had disappeared and he was greeted by a rain of bullets instead. "So," said del Vayo, "we must wait. I am sorry to have made you late for Paco." But as I was only an hour and a half late I was still able to get there half an hour before Paco, who had been delayed by something that had occurred during his bit of fighting on the Sierra. It is very odd to keep appointments with men who can always give you the perfectly good excuse that they have been made late by a bit of barbed wire, a machine gun, or a trench mortar.

Yes, it had been premature all right. The intolerable length of the days during civil war makes every one think that next week has come long before its time. Thirty, forty, fifty, sixty days were to pass, and still the agony of the Toledo Alcazar was to continue. The militia were to sit about in the streets and behind the barricades and the rebels in the Alcazar were to go on listening to the wireless and cheering, more feebly perhaps each time, the fifth, tenth, twentieth report that General Mola had entered Madrid, had captured Madrid's main water supply, had joined up with the southern

forces, and was about to relieve Toledo from Talavera de la Reina. And as they listened to the wireless day after day, they picked their teeth and dislodged fragments of the last mule ; that last mule which had been reached, we had been told, early in August, and yet was still to be eaten, with fourteen other mules, in mid-September.

Not that no progress was being made on either side. By mid-September the rebel forces were really at Talavera, and by mid-September the tunnel patiently mined by experts from Asturias had penetrated beneath the cottages until the drills were grinding and picking at the solid rock under the Alcazar's one remaining tower.

One morning the commander of the militia, bareheaded, his arms crossed over his chest, walked out into the centre of the Plaza de Zocodover, past that pathetic café table without a marble top and down the avenue of death to the gates of the Alzacar. At the gate the rebels blindfolded him and led him in. He had come to plead with them. Very soon they were going to blow the whole fortress into the air. In the name of humanity let them send out the women and children. They should be given safe conduct, and be fed and looked after.

"They shall die with us," the commander of the rebels replied. The government officer returned and one minute later the stupid process of shooting off three million rounds of ammunition began again. The horror of civil war had reached its height. The Toledo forces faced necessity, the ghastly bravery of their enemies must reach its appointed end. Irun had fallen, San Sebastian had been abandoned ; the rebels had brought columns of Moors almost within striking distance ; more and more German and Italian aeroplanes were helping ; man, woman, and child must be blown into the air. The tunnel was complete. Two tons of dynamite were in position.

On Friday, 19th September, the sixty-third day of the siege, the civilian population of Toledo was told to leave the town. They filed out of the city gate, and from the previous dusk on through the night a constant stream of old and young dodged their way behind the row of cottages and the pile of sandbags across the main road until many of them were sitting on the hill from which I first looked across at the Alcazar.

Dawn broke All eyes were fixed on the smoking, partly ruined, monster building, which had brooded over the brawling

mobes of Toledo for so many centuries. Of the four towers only one remained, the south-western one, and the four-square majesty of the structure was altogether gone. From this tower, although nobody in this waiting crowd could see them, two rebels, knowing what was coming, jumped to a quicker death than would otherwise have been their lot.

At a quarter-past six some one seventy yards from the Alcazar pulled a switch, and the distant crowds saw the last tower rise into the air and fall in fragments. While the horror of the sight was still only half grasped, there came the horror of sound, a roar of man-made thunder, and the horror of touch, the tremble of a man-made earthquake.

Within the city huge blocks of masonry scattered themselves in every direction, crushing roofs and falling shattered in the empty streets. There was a pause for a few seconds as the brown cloud of smoke steadied itself around the building, and then two hundred picked militiamen rushed upon the ruins.

For six hours they fought the survivors; hand grenades, rifles, machine guns took their toll, and at the end of six hours half their number had been killed and the rebels still held on. As night fell once more a few refugees crawled out of the ruins and reached the government lines; half-crazed women were helped over the barricades; militiamen returned carrying children in their arms; the state of affairs in the dungeons can only be guessed. The end had not yet come.

In the Plaza de Zocodover the armoured car used as a barricade was cut in two by the explosion and half of it landed on the fire station nearby.

But even now the Alcazar had not fallen, and the Moors were coming up in sober truth from Talavera de la Reina. A few days more and news came that the city was captured.

"STOP PRESS NEWS.

Thursday, Oct. 1st. Toledo

#### MASS SUICIDE: ANARCHISTS BURNED TO DEATH

"General Varela said that yesterday about forty anarchists committed suicide *en masse* in a seminary when they were trapped after the capture of Toledo.

"Shouting 'Viva la Muerte,' meaning 'Long live Death,' the anarchists drank large quantities of anisette (a liqueur resembling absinthe), and then set fire to the building, burning themselves to death.

"General Varela also said that 100 Anarchists were burned to death in San Juan Hospital. The hospital was surrounded, but the Anarchists resisted capture, and the building was shelled and set on fire.

#### LOYALISTS BESIEGED

"According to News reaching St. Jean de Luz, the insurgents in Toledo have turned the tables on the men who besieged the Alcazar. Fifty Government troops are said to have taken refuge in the seminary there, and are desperately holding out against the insurgents. It is believed that there are a number of women and children with them."

To which I may add a few notes. The seminary which is said to have been set on fire by "anarchists" is the building from whose roof I photographed the Alcazar. The "anarchists" are doubtless the men that I saw in the barricades. It would be more sensible but less colourful to call them the troops defending the democratically elected government of Spain. My friend, the captain, has either been killed, or set himself on fire, or is defending himself in the ruined Alcazar.

One October evening in London I sat showing my Toledo photographs to a World-War veteran. I described the barricades, the corners where one ran from the bullets, the natural site on which Toledo is built. He listened with growing surprise and pity.

"That street corner," he said, "do they have to cross it often?"

"All day long."

"Then, my God, why don't they hang a sheet across the road; then they could walk across without any sniper being able to do a thing! We used to blanket miles of communication roads. Can't somebody tell them how to fight?"

Of course I would never have thought of that; and now I kicked myself for not having suggested to the captain that a blanket would be a good idea. And yet, thinking of the captain, I doubt whether the blanket would have been welcomed. There is that appalling element of stupid contempt of death, of being ashamed to take cover. Probably every militiaman insisted on crossing exposed places a few times a day to make life more interesting.

"And why didn't they mine the thing properly? And how the hell did they manage to lose Toledo in the end?"



Why, twenty good men with machine guns could hold up twenty thousand indefinitely. And surely they can buy barbed wire, or make it? A few yards of barbed wire and a machine gun, and nobody could take Toledo."

Yet Toledo was taken. Machine has triumphed over man. The men in my photographs were burned to death or shot against a wall.

An English newspaper of conservative complexion records that Toledo to-day is empty. "It is a mystery," it says, "where the population has gone." Well! well! Instead of welcoming their Moorish deliverers with open arms they seem to have shown them a clean pair of heels.

# THE MANIAC WITH THE RAZOR

*By*

HALLIDAY SUTHERLAND

“**W**ANTED, a detective—to arrest the flight of time.” These strange words, heard by me as a boy of eight, were spoken by a man who lodged one summer at the farmhouse in the Highlands of Scotland where my father, mother, and sister, three years my junior, usually spent our holidays. The name of the man was Mr. Cox. His bedroom was over our sitting-room, and, on fine mornings, Ellen, the farmer’s daughter, a woman of twenty-five, carried his wicker arm-chair out into a field near the house—and there the tall, silent man, with white and often unshaven face, would sit with a rug over his knees and a deer-stalker cap on his head. At meal-times Ellen went out to fetch him, and he followed her back into the house like a tame animal.

Once, when crossing the field, I passed near to his chair and heard him mutter : “ Wanted, a detective—to arrest the flight of time.” I asked my mother why he said it, and she told me that Mr. Cox was not quite well. My father, who was a doctor, said : “ He has no right to be here,” and also told me that once Mr. Cox had won his blue for boxing at a great English university.

There was fishing in the river below the house and in the mountain burns, rabbits to be shot on the farm, and game to be poached. Mr. Cox did none of these things ; he never even went for walks, nor, so far as I knew, did he ever read books or newspapers. He sat in the field all day looking down at the grass, but if any of the wandering barnyard fowls came near he would rise, waving his stick and shouting words which I knew to be oaths. All the dogs about the farm avoided him, and horses grazing in the field never approached his chair.

The house stood on a small plateau on the south bank of the swift-running river that flowed down the glen, and from the other bank there rose a barrier of rugged hills and volcanic rocks. On the hills were large purple patches of heather and smaller green patches of bracken and grasses, and here and there little woods of birch and of fir scrambled up the slopes. High and solitary above the crags was a silver birch—the tree that grows at greater heights than all other trees—and on sunny days pieces of quartz sparkled in the rocks. On the other side of the hills was an inland loch, very long, very narrow, and very deep, and from its farther shore rose the side of a great mountain crowned by a precipice. In clear weather the top of this crag could be seen from the house.

The great inland loch was out of sight and also the little steamers that passed through it on their way from one shore of Scotland to the other along the Caledonian Canal. Behind the house were rising moors, glens, and mountains where the mists of morning linger. Over these mountains and under the clouds was a wild country, where in late autumn the glens echoed to the roaring of stags. There I once found a great stone, and on the top, as on a savage altar, the skin and bones of a sheep picked clean by eagles.

Down the glen westwards ran the river in a series of broad shallows, narrow rapids, and deep pools. Just below the house was a salmon pool through which the water ran black and swirling. On our side of the pool was a sandy beach, and at the top end a little sandy bay of still, shallow water. Between the bay and the entrance of the rapids into the pool was a small plantation of bushes and trees. In dry weather this was a peninsula jutting into the pool, but when the river was in spate it was an island, and the water poured round it into the sandy bay. At the end of the peninsula was a withered ash with smooth trunk and branches, which was easy to climb naked. I would walk along a branch overhanging the place where the rapids poured into the pool, and from there dive into the stream. It was a very deep pool, and not always did I manage to reach the smooth rocks at the bottom. When I did, it seemed a long time before I got back to the surface and found that the moving wall of water had carried me to the tail end of the pool. What did I hope to find at the bottom? A salmon lying quiet, to be seized by the gills and dragged to the surface after a desperate struggle. The other thing I dreamt to find was the under-water entrance to a secret cave into which I could swim and find myself in

a cavern under the rocks on the farther bank. These were animal instincts, in childhood not altogether lost.

In the depths of the pool I found neither the salmon nor hidden caverns. The light was so dim that all I could see was the blurred outline of rocks past which the current carried me.

The water of the river and of the burns which feed it was peaty, but in the woods on either side were many springs clear as crystal on a floor of glistening pebbles.

Up and down the glen were farms and crofts, a mile or more apart, and beside each was a field or two of corn and a small walled-in garden, flanked at each corner by rowan trees, which kept away certain evil things that dwelt in the mountains. On calm days blue smoke from peat fires in the houses rose in the still air, and the silence of the hills was broken by the sound of running water, and now and then by the bleating of sheep, the crowing of the cock on a distant farm, the sharp, startled cry of the grouse—"Go-o back, go-o back"—or by the wail of a curlew.

On each side of the river was a road. The one on the other side was a real road with milestones, and the mail-coach passed by every day. But the road on our side was a peaceful, moss-covered road overhung by bracken on either side. There were no milestones here, but you knew the distances by the houses you passed or by the burns which ran across the road at the foot of little gullies.

Cameron was the name of the farmer with whom we lodged. He was sixty-five years of age; a short, white-bearded man with gnarled hands. His wife was ten years younger, and the family consisted of Ellen, Alec, Davy, and Donald, a lad of sixteen. Their features were rough cast, but the men had rosy faces and the women quiet eyes. In expression they looked serious, as do those who win their daily bread by tilling an unfertile soil and think deeply because they are very near to the three great mysteries of life: he was born; he begat children; he died.

One evening we were having "high" tea: fried trout—caught by me that day in one of the mountain burns—home-made oatcakes and scones, fresh butter, strawberry jam, heather honey in the comb, and tea with cream.

Around the table sat my father, mother, sister, and myself. There were two windows in the sitting-room. The front window looked on to the rough lawn and the back window on to a kitchen-garden. It was daylight, although near

sunset, but even at night there were no blinds or shutters to close. My father sat with his back to the kitchen-garden, my mother sat opposite, and on either side were my sister and myself.

My father was of medium height, broad-shouldered, with strong features, black hair, and brown moustache. He had large brown eyes, well set apart, and bushy eyebrows—they were honest eyes.

In the midst of our meal we heard the slight clatter of plates as Ellen went upstairs with Mr. Cox's supper. Suddenly there was a scream and the high falsetto of a woman shrieking for help. From the kitchen old Mr. Cameron rushed along the corridor, shouting: "I'm coming, lass," followed by his two elder sons and three barking collies. The house shook as men and dogs ran up the narrow stairs.

My father had risen and reached the door, where he turned to say: "Stay here, every one of you." Then he left us and went upstairs too. There was a minute or two of silence followed by a thud which shook the ceiling. Something heavy had fallen on to the floor upstairs. My mother moaned: "Your father will be killed." Next moment came the tramp of heavy feet, the piercing screams of Ellen, the crash of falling furniture, and then another and heavier thud on the floor. Again a moment of silence, broken by my father's voice shouting from the top of the stairs: "Ropes! bring ropes, I say. Donald, bring ropes."

Ellen ran down the stairs to help her younger brother to find the rope, and from the kitchen came the cries of Mrs. Cameron: "Oh, woe is me!" From the room above all that we heard was the snarling of dogs and the oaths of Mr. Cox. It seemed a long time before Ellen and Donald went upstairs with ropes trailing behind them. After another long interval those who had rushed upstairs came down slowly, and when my father re-entered the sitting-room blood was streaming down his face from a cut over the left eyebrow.

He had been the last to enter the room upstairs, where he found Mr. Cox holding Mr. Cameron by the neckband of his shirt and brandishing a razor at the old man's throat. The two sons, dull-witted in emergency, were standing inert, while the three dogs snarled and snapped round the legs of Mr. Cox. My father stepped forward: "How dare you threaten an old man with a razor. Put it down, sir!" Mr. Cox released Mr. Cameron, placed the open razor on the dressing-table, squared up, boxer that he was, and next

moment sent my father to the floor with a blow that cut open his left eyebrow. That was the first thud on the ceiling. Then Mr. Cameron and his two sons closed on Mr. Cox and the struggle began. My father rose to his feet and went to their aid. Again there was a crash as four men and a madman fell together on the floor. When the ropes arrived, Mr. Cox was tied hand and foot, lifted on to his bed, and there bound down again.

My father sat down in the arm-chair, and my mother brought two handkerchiefs which made a pad and bandage for the cut. Then she found pen, ink, and paper, and my father wrote a note to the doctor who visited Mr. Cox from time to time. The doctor's house was eight miles away, and Donald had to ride there that night with the note. "Your patient," wrote my father, "is a homicidal epileptic. We leave here in the morning. You must arrange for his immediate removal to the county asylum." We then resumed our high tea, now cold and unattractive, and awaited Donald's return. This was not a night on which children could be sent to bed early. Soon after ten o'clock Donald was back. The doctor would come in the morning with a wagonette and three men to take Mr. Cox away.

Having given Donald's news, Mr. Cameron asked if Ellen might give Mr. Cox a drink of milk. "Yes, if she feeds him," said my father. Ellen went upstairs with the glass of milk. She was there some time, and, as she came down, father opened the door and asked: "Is he all right?"

"Yes, doctor, yes," she answered, and ran along the corridor to the kitchen. The door of our sitting-room had not been closed for more than a moment when there was a thud on the ceiling and sounds of movement in the room above.

"My God!" said my father, and Mr. Cameron rushed along the corridor shouting:

"Doctor, doctor! she's loosed the ropes. Will ye no' go up again?"

"The fool!" shouted my father. "Never again. Back to your kitchen and barricade yourselves in. We will stay in this room."

There was no lock on the door, but we dragged a little bookcase from the wall and made it lean against the panels. Behind the bookcase we placed a small harmonium. Such was the barricade. My mother cleared the table, putting the dishes into the larder.

"You and the children had better go in there," said my father, indicating the little room under the stairs, "and lock the door. I stay here." I wished to stay with him, so he said: "Very well."

Once my mother and sister were in the little room, my father moved the lamp from the table to the mantelshelf and drew the table nearer the back window. On the table he laid his twelve-bore gun and beside it a box of cartridges. Then he sat down, facing the door, and loaded his gun. As he did this he looked carefully at the number on the outer wad of the cartridges, and I noticed that he chose No. 00. That was buckshot, the heaviest charge. He laid his loaded gun on the table.

The horse-hair arm-chair stood by the hearth, and I was told to rest there.

From the room above came sounds of some one fumbling about in the dark, for the lamp had been removed from Mr. Cox's room. Just then the door of the little bedroom opened. My mother came out and saw the gun on the table.

"Jack, you're not going to—to—?"

"Stay in that room, and lock the door. I take no risks."

As I watched my father sitting quietly at the table, I could have cried, because blood was trickling down from beneath the bandage, making a dark, black stain on the front of his Harris-tweed jacket. But there were times when he hated tears. This was such a time—and on his death-bed was the last. And yet he and I had shed tears over the sorrows of *Les Misérables*, which he had read aloud to me.

I began to think of the great criminal, Jean Valjean, of Gavroche, the boy who slept with the rats inside the belly of the stone elephant, of cruel Inspector Javert who rubbed the snow down poor Cosette's back, and of kind Bishop Myriel whose door was never locked. Had my father been a bishop, I felt sure he would have been like Bishop Myriel. He was kind to criminals. There was the burglar he had saved from pneumonia in the Glasgow prison. On leaving jail the man had thanked him. One morning the police found a sack of stolen silver outside our front door. Had my father any idea who had left it there? The detectives thought it must be some thief whom he had treated in prison. A grateful thief? No; my father had no recollection of any one likely to leave silver at his door. But at breakfast he made a cryptic remark: "Gratitude is very rare." And, musing thus, I dozed in the arm-chair.



*I saw his face and staring eyes peering in.*





It was past midnight when I awoke. There had been a crash upstairs. My father was sitting at the table as before, but now he held the gun in his hands. "Is he coming down?" I asked.

"Hist, I think so."

The stairs creaked; Mr. Cox was coming down very quietly. Intent on listening, we could scarcely hear a sound when he reached the foot of the stairs. Very gently the handle of our door was turned, the door was forced open an inch, and the little barricade moved slightly. My father's voice rang clear and steady: "Go back to your room, or I shoot."

There was no reply, but the footsteps moved away from our door. Next came the crash of broken glass, falling flower-pots, and a fumbling with the lock of the front door.

"In the porch. He's going out of the house! Put the lamp out, or he'll see us through the window."

I turned down the wick and pressed the extinguisher. My father moved to the wall opposite the fireplace, where he could watch both windows, and there I stood beside him. We heard the front door open. Mr. Cox was outside. Again there was silence.

"Can you see where he is?" asked my father.

I moved to the middle of the room. "He's standing in the middle of the grass. Now he's coming to the window." In a moment I was back beside my father. It was moonlight and the moon was over the mountains on the other side of the river. As Mr. Cox approached the window the light of the moon threw a dark shadow on the carpet. Then his body almost occluded the window, and through the upper pane I saw his face and staring eyes peering in—and above the face the outline of a deer-stalker cap. I was afraid, although I knew that I was safe. My father had raised the gun to his right shoulder and its barrels were levelled at the figure outside the window. It seemed quite natural that Mr. Cox was going to be shot. He was a wild animal who would kill us all if he could; but my greatest sense of security came from the homely peat-smoke odour from my father's Harris tweed. Suddenly Mr. Cox turned from the window, rushed back through the porch, and fled upstairs to his room. His door was slammed, and then began a new noise of snarling and tearing. My father sat down again and put the gun on the table. "He'll soon tire himself out. Then he'll sleep for hours. He's tearing up his bedding."

When I awoke in the arm-chair it was daylight. My

mother was packing up our luggage, and the farmer's gig stood on the lawn. It was seven o'clock, and after a hurried breakfast we set off on a two hours' drive up the glen and round the hills, to a pier on the long inland loch where the steamer called. We were going farther west, to friends. Before we left words passed between Mr. Cameron and my father.

"It's hard, doctor, for me to be losing all my summer visitors in a day. And yon Mr. Cox, with all his faults—his lawyer paid me well."

"Lose your visitors!" said my father; "last night you nearly lost your life."

On board the steamer my mother and sister went down to rest in the cabin, while my father and I walked the deck. He wore a cap, and under the clean handkerchief round his forehead his left eye was black and swollen. It was not a pleasant sight, and one or two people looked at him as we passed. One man on deck might have been going to a funeral. He was dressed in black and wore a black trilby hat. His waistcoat was cut low at the neck showing an expanse of white front—an imitation white shirt with a single brass stud in the centre. He wore a low white collar and a black bow tie. He was pale, with watery blue eyes, and had a short, square, yellow beard. Crossing to our side of the deck, he stood directly in my father's way and smiled as he held out a leaflet. "May I offer you a tract, brother?"

"No, thanks," said my father. "I'm not interested," and turned to walk off.

But the man walked alongside him and continued to talk, although my father ignored him. "Brother, when I saw you coming on board I said to myself: a brand to be plucked from the burning. You must think of your wife and children, brother. Last night the devil gained a victory. Thank God the injury was no worse! Strong drink, brother, is like a raving—"

"Be off," shouted my father. "Be off, you damned scoundrel, or I'll put you overboard."

The man shook his head sadly, and left us, saying as he went: "I'll pray for you, brother."

There are people who walk about the earth asking to be murdered and there are times when homicide is justifiable

# THE RETREAT

By

AUBREY WADE

*The twenty-first of March 1918 is a date that can never be forgotten in the history of the Great War. It nearly spelled defeat for the Allies—it was the day that the great retreat began. This is the vivid story of a man who was with the artillery, and whose guns helped to cover that retreat. When the retreat began, they were stationed at Jussy, and it is at Jussy that his story opens.*

A T half-past four in the morning I thought the world was coming to an end.

We awoke to the sound of débris pattering on the roof of the hut, débris which was flying right and left from the explosion of a great shell somewhere near at hand. Before I had properly grasped what had occurred another shell came down with a terrific roar just outside. I had a momentary glimpse of the end of the structure collapsing like a piece of stage scenery; the whole place shook about our ears with the violence of the explosion; I felt sure the next one would annihilate us. Frantically I dragged on my clothes and cursed myself for being such a fool as to undress in spite of the warning. Shells were falling everywhere now in a heavy bombardment. More frequent flashes lit up the windows, and while I tugged desperately at my big field-boots, something ripped through the woodwork near my face. A great hole showed where it passed through the wall; my candle had disappeared, leaving me to scramble for the rest of my equipment in a darkness charged with terror.

And then, amid the crash of the shells, we heard a voice: "Stand to the horses! Stand to the horses!"

There was a movement to the door, a careful hesitating advance into the darkness outside; one by one the drivers

filed out and went over to the horse-lines on the other side of the field. I was last through the door, and on my way out I spotted some one huddled up in bed right by the entrance. I knew whose bed it was, it was that of a certain lanky Scottish recruit who was on the sick-list with boils all over him. I shook him urgently. "Come on, man; you'll be killed if you stop here!"

A weak voice answered me from beneath the blankets: "Och awa' wi' ye. I'm aff duty!"

"You'd better come. It's not safe here, mind."

"I'm aff duty, I tell ye!"

There was not much time to waste on a lunatic like that, so I gave him up and followed the others; and half-way over to the horses I was glad I had not waited any longer, for a shell shrieked into the exact centre of the four huts and must have killed him as he lay there.

In the stables, I took hold of my horse and led her out across the field to where the rest of the waggon-line occupants loomed up in the heavy fog that shrouded everything. It was a thick, cold, clammy sort of mist, so dense that it was impossible to see more than a few yards in front of one's face. Here, away from the huts, there were no shells dangerously close; the violence of the bombardment was concentrated on the huts, the village behind, and the roads to the line and back to Flavy. I stood with the reins looped over my arm, my little mare grazing quietly, for perhaps a quarter of an hour, getting a glimpse of the others now and then through the fog.

A full hour passed, during which time the shelling seemed to get even worse, so that when I heard some one calling me by name I guessed there had been something happening at the guns.

And I was not wrong. I was wanted to replace casualties.

Our little party of gunners and signallers left the waggon-line as the mist was clearing. We could see the road quite plainly in front of us—so plainly, in fact, that we saw things on it which decided us not to take the road at all but make a *détour* across country. Only a few hours previously I had ridden along that road in the light of the stars, and it had seemed like a country road at home in its untouched whiteness; but now it was different. The shells had torn great holes in its length, and with the shells had come the red splashes of death where ammunition-waggons and infantry transport

had been caught in the open when the barrage started. Smashed vehicles festooned its borders; horses lay there rigid alongside them, and occasionally a blotch of khaki.

The gun-position looked somehow different. Something had been happening there, too. Shell-holes were dotted about between the guns, gaping holes which showed up glaringly against the smooth green of the turf, and the guns were in action with the covers off and piles of ammunition ready at the trails. No shells came over as we walked on to the position, and ahead in the line the landscape was beginning to show its accustomed outlines as the fog lifted. Outside the T.D.O. there was a little crowd of gunners, and an officer bending over some one who was lying on the grass at their feet. It was poor old Corporal S——, of the signallers, who had caught it badly, and was about to be carried away to the dressing-station. I looked at his face as the stretcher passed me, and recognition came into his eyes. And then they called me into the dugout to take over the telephone.

All the morning the gunners "stood to," ready to fire as soon as we should hear where the enemy had got to in their advance. No information had come down yet except the tales the wounded had to tell of how they had been suddenly overwhelmed in the front line and surrounded by hordes of Jerries in the fog. The enemy had broken through all right after the terrific bombardment of the early hours, but he was held up somewhere or other, and now and again the rattle of machine guns came back to us.

The front grew quieter as the morning wore on. Shelling became less frequent. But the fog had cleared completely, and every moment we expected orders for action now that observation of the enemy movements was possible. Towards midday the noises of firing dropped to an occasional shell or so, and then came silence. It was all very mysterious and alarming. What was happening up there in front? Should we see the Boches coming over?

It was half-past twelve when the first message came over the phone. Five minutes later the range had been worked out and the battery was in action, banging away at some unseen target over the low slopes in front of us, wooded slopes towards which we had directed half-fearful glances during the morning. With minor alterations of range the guns kept it up for the next hour, two rounds per gun per minute, and I seized the opportunity of getting out on the position to have a look at things.

Directly ahead the rising ground precluded all view of the line, so my sightseeing was limited to the flanks. On the right there was another battery in action about half a mile away, going strong with flashing salvoes. I looked to the left, and then I saw something which made my heart contract and sent me running back to the T.D.O. to fetch Ross out to have a look.

The infantry were running away.

Down the slopes they came, throwing away their rifles as they ran, coming down towards the guns at the double in twos and threes, hatless and wholly demoralised, calling out to us as they passed that Jerry was through and that it was all over. No use staying there with those guns, they yelled as they ran by; he was through! Privates, non-commissioned officers, running for their lives out of the horror they had tried to stand up to all that day, running past our guns in increasing numbers, and making us realise to the full the desperate plight we were in. Why should we not retire as well and save the guns?

But the Major was out on the position now, tight-lipped and grim, swinging his revolver in his hand and telling us all that no man was to leave the guns without orders or he would be shot; watching the rise ahead and then glancing back at the broken remnant of the battalion fleeing in disorder; sweeping the skyline with his glasses for the first signs of grey figures coming over—we were to stay.

Towards three o'clock more and more infantry retired on our left and made us feel that we would shortly be the only people in the line at all. Messages came through with increasing rapidity ordering us to fire here and there on the advancing enemy. The ammunition was running out and an orderly was sent galloping off to the waggon-line for more. The whole brigade was now firing salvo after salvo into Lambay Wood, just in front, where masses of the Jerries were. Across the front as far as the eye could see there was no other artillery brigade firing; the one on our right had packed up at midday, and we were alone on the sector with the whole might of the enemy closing on us.

No more infantry came down now. There were no more there. Inquisitive aeroplanes had found the coast all clear for a general advance. Only our brigade held the line, firing desultory salvoes into Lambay Wood, sweeping the guns across a too-wide arc of the front in a futile attempt to stay the tide of field-grey that was spreading towards us out there

in the darkness of the evening. Across the length and breadth of the sector, save only where our battery defiantly banged away and reloaded and banged again, there settled a prolonged silence. A faint and strangely alarming rumble of transport reached us at intervals from afar, as if the enemy had penetrated behind us on the flanks and was dragging up his artillery. We did not know. The hours went by to seven o'clock and then eight o'clock with still no order to retire. With the coming of night the guns ceased their work, as the location of the enemy was now shrouded in mystery. The next thing that would happen, I thought, would be our last shoot of the war, at point-blank range, as they came running down that same slope with their bombs and bayonets.

It was long past nine o'clock when the jingling gun-teams broke from the gloom behind the position and bore down upon us urgently. In a flurry of excitement at our release we hooked them in, working like mad at the swingle-trees of the limbers, grabbing telephones and equipment and running over our horses as soon as the guns were ready to pull out. I got mounted, looked around for Ross—ah, here he was, all aboard. The first of the guns was moving across the field now, and one by one the others dropped into line. We trotted ahead to our places. In a few minutes the whole battery was safely out on the road and headed in the direction of Jussy, moving along at a fast walk that for me, at least, was not fast enough. My strained ears had detected, in the last few moments on the position, a nearer rumbling than ever of unseen transport, a murmuring of vast columns on the move through the night.

We retired through Jussy, taking a last look at the old familiar scenes of the waggon-line as we rode past, at the huts, now wrecked by the storm of shell-fire of that morning, at the low horse-shelters behind them; and presently we were riding through the next village of Flavv-le-Martel.

Here on the outskirts of the place the Major turned his horse off the main road and steered left in a southerly direction. Ahead of us we could dimly make out the outline of a hill against the night sky, and we felt ourselves climbing a steady rise leading up to the summit of the hill, where we halted. Now we were on a sort of plateau, from which we could look down on the almost-side-by-side villages of Jussy and Flavv. It was nearly midnight. We had travelled a good way back and felt much safer up there by Faillouel on the hill. I began to think about getting some sleep now that we were clear of



immediate danger, but stood around for a while to find out what the orders were. There were no buildings near where we could billet; the guns had been run into position behind a low ridge in the open field so that if we slept at all it would be under the sky with all our clothes on. Then the order was passed round that we were staying there for the night. I found there was nothing for the signallers to do, so I spread my waterproof sheet under a waggon, wrapped myself in my shell-shocked coat and a blanket, and slept. I and the rest of the battery slept for five hours. I mention this because it was the longest sleep we had for ten days and nights following this first stand at Faillouel.

It was cold up there on that plateau. Very early in the morning I awoke half frozen and scrounged two more blankets that some one had left lying about. The guard was pacing back and fore in rear of the silent guns. Another hour or so passed before morning dragged us all out to see how the war was going on down in the valley, and the smell of breakfast was in the air. Evidently there was no danger just yet. No firing had been done during the night, but the guns were ready for any eventuality with a round in the breech.

Quite a number of the gunners, I noticed, were furtively eating biscuits and small cakes, and one or two of the more gluttonous were spreading the biscuits with condensed milk. Cigarettes were also in evidence, large packets of twenties and fifties that I stared at enviously, at the same time reflecting how foolish I had been not to have remembered that canteen in Flavy. The parsons had of course left everything they could not carry with them for the especial benefit of the troops following after; I determined to be on the look-out for the next canteen.

We opened fire on the approaching German infantry at ten o'clock that morning.

During the day we got shelled intermittently from the direction of Montescourt, doubtless in response to messages sent back by the scouting aeroplane which cruised cheekily over Faillouel and the battery, with no opposition from anti-aircraft guns. Nothing came near enough to do any damage, however. All day the guns flashed and cracked from the plateau with a steadily decreasing range as the Fritzes came on through Jussy in the valley below us. The rate of advance was slower now. Evidently they were chary of penetrating farther into open country where our task of dropping high-explosive into them would be ever so much easier, preferring

to hold on until their artillery could be brought to bear on the brigade that incessantly spoilt their crossing of the canal. A rumour spread that cavalry had been seen behind Jussy.

The short March afternoon waned, twilight fell, and still the guns kept up their barrage. Night found them lighting up the scrubby plateau with the six-fold flash of salvoes interspersed with successive rounds of gun-fire; no rest for the gunners and no friendly rolling of supporting artillery on either flank such as we were wont to hear in the line. In the small hours firing ceased for a while; then as soon as it was daylight somehow or other information came through which woke the guns again.

At midday there was more shelling and this time with more accuracy of aim, which was not to be wondered at now that they could look straight up at the battery-smoke on our plateau. Some of us scattered out of the way right over to the end of the field from where we found it was possible to see a wide stretch of what lay in front; and by dint of keeping careful watch I saw for the first time real live Germans on the warpath against us. They were a good way off, but the helmets were unmistakable.

Towards one o'clock came the disheartening sight of small detachments of our own infantry retiring on both sides of us. They came back in little knots of twos and threes, scattered wide apart. Seeing them made us more anxious than ever to get out to the crossroads before our way of escape was quite cut off. But right up to the last we were kept at it, firing now with the gun-teams hooked in alongside and the whole battery in a growing state of anticipation. From the smoke-covered position itself the actual front could not be seen, the banks of the lane obstructing our view, and our consequent ignorance of the movements of the enemy added to our alarm.

Then all of a sudden the gun stopped firing. I looked round. A messenger was galloping off to the other batteries, his horse's hoofs strumming across the plateau. There was a yell of "Limber up!" and in a moment the guns were hidden by the swift-wheeling teams manœuvring for the hook-in. Sharp orders rattled out. The position was now a confusion of horses, guns, and men, a confusion that straightened itself out as the first team drew clear and made for the gate. I leapt into the saddle, beckoned to Ross, and struck off after them before the next team should come through and perhaps get

stuck in the difficult gateway. The first gun had managed it all right and was out in the lane waiting for the others, perhaps two hundred yards away from the gate. We rode to the head of them, dismounted for fear of observation up there on horseback, and hung about consumed with impatience at the time the rest of the battery were taking to follow us. At painfully slow intervals the teams struggled through and joined the column. Now there remained only one gun in the field. Anxiously we waited for its appearance, saw the heads of the leaders showing in the gateway, and then realised with a sharp fear that they were stuck. Over-eagerness and the psychological effect on the drivers of being last out had resulted in their "trying to take the gate with them." The Major was there directing the efforts of sweating gunners and steadying the frantic horses. Every second we expected to see coal-scuttle helmets coming round the corner of the crossroads.

I kept a sharp watch on the end of the lane. Should they come now I would be their first capture, then Ross, and then the whole line of guns. We stood close to our horses and hoped against hope that somehow that gun would come through. And then on top of everything came the whining scream of shells, one after the other, pounding on the plateau behind us and making the horses snort in fright. In the midst of all this I became aware that some one was scrambling down the bank towards me. I whirled round to find myself confronted by a young infantry officer with two privates in attendance. He, and they, had evidently been having a rough time somewhere. His face was dirty and bloodstreaked, his uniform nearly in tatters. I realised with a shock that he was mad.

"Who are you?" he snarled, his eyes glaring, "and where are you going?"

"A Battery, 2—th Brigade, sir, preparing to retire."

"Retire?" he said. "Retire?" A wan smile flickered over his face as I answered him. "Retire?" he repeated dreamily. "But you can't retire. Don't you know that the German army is advancing up this slope?"

I knew only too well. "Yes, sir."

"Well, damn you, you must stop them!"

The glare returned. I felt very uncomfortable, and wished the Major would come along. I didn't like the way the stranger clapped the bolt of his rifle as he spoke.

"Now, come along all of you," he continued. "Get

those rifles off the guns and climb up on the bank with my two hussars and hold the enemy. Get a move on, damn you ! ”

The drivers stared open-mouthed as Ross and I obeyed his orders and began slowly to unfasten the straps that held the rifles on the gun-limber. The two hussars had now posted themselves on top of the bank, but the officer stood there in the road muttering to himself. In desperation I called to him, “ What about all these guns, sir ? ”

His only answer was to raise his rifle till he had me covered, and I really thought he would shoot. I went on unstrapping, and had got one rifle loose when I heard the urgent gallop of hoofs and the Major’s voice : “ Walk MARCH ! ”

The poor mad officer turned to meet him. I slipped the rifle back in its place, dived between the wheel and centre horses and ran round to get my own mount, with Ross close at my heels. As we moved off I turned to watch developments. The Colonel had arrived now and was glaring at the forlorn figure in his path. I felt terribly sorry for the infantry officer, but he seemed past all reasoning with, and I had a last glimpse of him going to meet his end at the side of his two hussars on the top of the bank.

He vanished from my mind as we approached the cross-roads and heard continuous whinings of bullets over our heads. We kept low on our horses. As long as the bank sheltered us it was not so bad, but at the turn there lay an open expanse in the centre of which was the crossroads. We began to trot. Behind us the ground quivered to the successive shocks of shells that smothered the plateau in black explosions.

“ Trot out ! ”

At a fast trot that threatened to break into a gallop we rode into full view of the German armoured car that was stuck there on the road up from Flavy with its machine gun spitting and cracking at the unexpected target that had so suddenly presented itself. Faster and faster grew the pace ; the noise of the guns and vehicles behind us increased to a sustained roar, and round we went with our heads down alongside the necks of our horses and the air full of eerie whistlings.

A mile down the road we eased up and finally settled down to a brisk walk-out now that the immediate danger was past. A little farther along we saw a sergeant of our B battery riding back to meet us. I thought B were through all right, but the next day I heard that they had been left behind to deal with the cavalry and that one of their gun-teams had been disabled

at the crossroads by the machine gun. The sergeant had volunteered to go back and get the gun.

Very much pleased with ourselves at having got safely out of such a tight corner, we rode at ease through open, untouched country where the road wound gently around low wooded hills and dipped into pleasant valleys, wondering now and again where the Fritzes might be and how much farther we were to retire. There was no general flight on the part of the army which was in the line, or at least their flight was not visible. It was true that many bedraggled parties of infantrymen had passed through our positions that day, but apart from them we saw no great bodies of troops on the move. The reason for this I discovered later was the fact that the line had been so thinly held that when the retirement started there was hardly any one left to retire. Our own division, the Fourteenth, to which we had been attached for the last few months, seemed to be lost altogether. For the first three days of the great retreat of the Fifth Army we had seen no other artillery at all, nor had we heard any.

We were still retreating in a southerly direction which was bringing us more and more into the French army area. As yet we had seen no French troops, but a strong rumour spread that one of their army corps was hurrying to our support and would come along at any moment. We discovered some days afterwards that they were hurrying in a totally different direction.

At four o'clock in the afternoon the brigade dropped into action in open country with the guns elevated to fire over a range of thickly wooded hills. I did not know where the enemy were, and even now I do not know. A brisk rate of firing were kept up all the evening and till long past midnight. Sleep was again denied us ; during the night we were shelled with light stuff which indicated that the enemy field batteries were not very far behind their infantry. All sorts of wild rumours were current. It was said that we were entirely surrounded and that the enemy was now in our rear and slowly closing in. We lost the desire for sleep, fidgeting about aimlessly round the guns and hoping the next move was not far off. But it was ten o'clock in the morning when the order arrived.

This time we did not travel very far back. Just over the next range of hills, descending slowly on the other side, we saw a level plain spread out before us, a plain that bore no sign of activity. It seemed that the brigade were the sole

survivors of the Fifth Army in this part of the line. No help showed itself on either hand; there was just the brigade vainly trying to steady things up and escaping by the skin of its teeth from the rapidly advancing enemy, a rolling expanse of deserted country greeting us as we deployed into action again, and a sense of unreality hanging over everything.

We opened fire again on our unseen target at three o'clock in the afternoon, but not for long. Nerves were getting frayed. In the absence of information it was suicidal to delay our retirement. Cavalry might be sweeping round on the flanks. And the French had not come yet.

Another hour of the road, then action again. Six o'clock now on the 24th of March. Strung out across the low-lying fields were the silent guns, eighteen of them in a line together, with wider spaces between marking off the batteries, trained carefully on a dip in the wooded skyline in front of them. Through this small defile the enemy would most certainly appear, and the first sight of field-grey against the trees would jerk the firing-levers of the whole brigade. We stared at the distant woods, and waited.

Then suddenly from behind us, from the quiet countryside, rode forth at the gallop a magnificent line of French cavalry. We thrilled to their approach. Straight for the line they rode, passing on the right of the guns with pennons flying from erect lances and urging their horses to greater speed as they took the slope leading up to the woods ahead. They breasted the rise in open formation, drawn apart from each other somewhat but in perfect line as the fringe of the trees was reached. Now we took our gaze off them and looked behind us again, this time fully expecting to see the landscape hidden by the moving masses of horizon-blue uniforms, which we had so long awaited. But there was nothing to be seen. Keenly disappointed we returned to the more hopeful sight of the single line of horsemen on the hillside. We still felt sure that they must be the advance guard of the legions to come. But even this picture had taken on a different aspect now, and the last vestiges of hope died in our hearts as we saw them turn tail at the approach to the defile and come flying back down the slope at a much greater speed than they had gone up it. We concluded sadly that they had only been retreating the wrong way and had discovered their mistake in time. Somewhere at the end of the line of guns there sounded a faint, ironic cheer as the Cuirassiers or Chasseurs or whatever they were disappeared the way they had come.

Darkness came on without the slightest sign of the enemy's appearance in the defile so carefully covered by the guns. And once it was dark it was no use waiting any longer ; so about nine o'clock we took to the road again.

Through the night we rode, strangers in a strange land of great mysterious woods and silent, deserted hamlets. There was not a soul left in the villages on our line of march, the population of the countryside having abandoned everything and fled twenty-four hours before the retreating armies came through. What they could not carry with them they had left behind, and there were whole rows and streets of cottages with furniture in them and curtains still up at the windows, all ready to be plundered and perhaps burnt by the Jerries in a few hours' time. It seemed only right that we should take away what we could in order that it should not fall into the hands of the enemy, but strict orders were issued against looting. When darkness fell, however, we did a bit of foraging in one village, and several bottles of wine made their appearance ; moreover, when we pulled into Crissolles to billet for the night, I was sure I could smell roast chicken somewhere.

Billet for the night was the order. Already it was twelve o'clock. We were not to undress but to lie down in the nearby barns with all our clothes on and the harness on the horses' backs. Our barn-load debated whether we should take off just a few of our things, and, very stupidly in view of the circumstances, we decided to undress and put our clothes handy so that we could slip them on at once if necessary.

It became necessary at one o'clock, after we had slept like logs for a short hour. Some one burst in through the door of the barn, waking us up with excited shouts : " Come on out of it ! Jerry's in the end of the village ! " A mad scramble ensued ; we fought for our boots and puttees and tunics in pitch darkness, no one stopping to light a candle, then we fell over each other in our haste to be going. The battery was moving off already ; our subsection sergeant was yelling himself hoarse for us to get our horses and follow ; we got mounted in a hurry, with bandoliers hanging round our necks, and trotted out of the field down to the road. Everything and everybody seemed to be on the move ; columns of vehicles were retiring through the village at a brisk trot while our brigade waited to collect its stragglers and follow suit. Then we too made off in the direction of supposed safety, clearing the outskirts of Crissolles at the same time as the field-greys

cautiously advanced through its streets and burnt a barn here and there to give themselves light.

Away on the right a red glow shone against the night sky ; another village was being fired, perhaps a town. To the left was the blackness of great forests ; everything was shrouded in silence, and the air seemed charged with suspense and uncertainty. For all we knew we were running right into their hands as the gloomy woods closed in over the road. We listened for the noises of German cavalry galloping to head us off, but the silence held.

There was some little excitement when it became known that one of the members of the battery had been left behind in Crissolles. The missing man was an N.C.O. who had somehow failed to hear the alarm and had looked out of his deserted loft to see German infantry in the yard below him. He dropped through the window on the other side and ran for it, catching us up some hours later by sheer good luck.

Here was a crossroads, and a mounted figure, a staff officer. I could see the red tabs and the gold braid. The whole brigade halted dead behind us as the Major stopped to receive orders. Two torches played eagerly over maps at the saddle-bows. Noyon, said the Major. Roye, said the staff officer, very stiffly and brusquely. That way, said the Major. This way, said the staff captain, pointing. Under no circumstances, said the Major ; the line of retreat lay so-and-so and so-and-so and so on, and he would take full responsibility. A new note had come into his voice, hard and authoritative ; the staff officer could do what he liked, but this particular brigade was going this way and no other way.

We drew on, leaving the staff captain with his gold braid and red tabs standing in the shadows out of our way. Good old Major !

The signposts told us that we had left Noyon behind us a little way now. Soon it would be captured, a great town full of shops and the like, now merely an incident of the night to us, a passing memory of a word on the signposts. We were concerned more with the strange noises on our left. Since leaving Crissolles we had heard them continuously, a loud rumbling of transport that seemed to be coming nearer, as though the road upon which the unknown army travelled ran parallel with our own. As the roar grew louder, one thought only filled our minds—the Jerries were cutting us off ! Their road was converging upon ours, and sooner or



later it would join at a fork and we should be done for. Why didn't we trot and make a dash for it?

The Major told me then to ride back for Corporal G——, hand over my horse to him and send him up ahead for orders. I did so very reluctantly; I didn't want to lose my grey, and besides it meant having to ride on the waggons or a gun-limber, which was very uncomfortable. But the mare was handed over, Corporal G—— galloped off to report to the Major, and we all heard him riding off alone into the darkness. Now the noise on our left was positively alarming in its closeness.

Then, suddenly, the level rumble of our own column changed to the heavier thundering of guns and waggons driving faster and faster on the echoing road. The waggon I was sitting on got under way at a rare pace, making me hold on tight to the hand-rail. Round a wide bend we careered before entering on a long straight stretch which promised a gallop. And gallop we did. It was half a mile or more to the next bend, and here it was that the other road met ours, running into it from the shadows. And at a fork, bolt upright in his saddle, with rifle levelled at the livid face of a French general, sat Corporal G——, holding back a whole division of flying Frenchmen that we might get out first.

Morning came while we were still on the road. The pace had dropped some hours since to a monotonous walk. We went on, half asleep in our saddles, hungry, thirsty, gnawing at mouldy bits of biscuit hunted up from our pockets, chilled through and through with the bitter wind of the March dawn. We rode through deserted hamlets and now and again a larger village, its main street crowded with the vehicles and horses of the armies in retreat with us—there were long delays while the disorder of traffic was sorted out somehow and sent on its weary way again; then we were alone once more on the road as the dawn showed us a wide view of open country. At nine o'clock, still breakfastless, we dropped into action near the village of Lagny.

All day the guns kept up their barrage on the roads that we had ourselves traversed during the night. The ranges were very short; that fact we realised without caring much for its significance, for we were very tired and moved about as in a dream.

Late afternoon saw the usual spectacle of the infantry retiring. Small parties of them threaded their way past our guns, some slightly wounded, all drooping with fatigue. They

asked for something to eat, but we had nothing ourselves and they carried on resignedly. Two or three of the Staffords flung themselves down by the guns, utterly worn out and unable to go any farther. From them we got news of the proximity of the German infantry, news which made us wonder why the Jerries did not make one clean sweep with their cavalry and cut off the last scattered remnants of the Fifth Army. There was no one at all in the line.

"Did you see anything of a staff officer on the road?" asked one of the infantrymen, a corporal.

"On horseback?" I remembered the staff captain.

"Yes."

"We saw one last night trying to direct traffic. That the one you mean?"

"That's the bloke. He tried to direct us, but we lynched him. He was a Jerry."

With the disappearance of the infantry we knew it would not be long before we, too, took the road again. Another night of travel faced us. Already we were a good forty miles from St. Quentin and it looked as though we should be on the run for a few more days at least, as there seemed no sign of a stand being made anywhere. At nightfall, therefore, we limbered up to retire, and this time we trusted there was to be a sleep at the end of the march. We could not go on much longer without food or sleep.

We arrived in Thiescourt village at midnight. The rattle of the guns on the *pavé* woke us out of our doze, and we looked around expectantly, thinking that here at last was the long-awaited billet where we should sleep for at least twenty-four hours. But the place was alive with other artillery and infantry and transport of all kinds, crowded wheel to wheel in the main square in a solid block of traffic that moved this way and that way and yet did not move at all. Behind us more and more horses and waggons poured into the village to add to the congestion. It was like a jam of logs on a Canadian river, waiting for some one to move the key-log.

Eventually we scrambled through amid the curses of those who were squeezed against our wheels as we pulled out. The bottleneck of Thiescourt, where we had been stuck for over an hour, released us into the starlit night, and we rode on again muffled up against the cold. Then followed six solid hours of the road, with billets as far away as ever and the horses on the point of collapse.

Three days later there was a strange sight to be seen in a

field on the outskirts of Arsy village near to Compiègne : the sight of a whole brigade of Field Artillery, horses and men, fast asleep in full marching order. The Great Retreat, so far as we knew, was over at last ; the line had been stabilised at Amiens and the threatened drive through to Paris stopped just in time.

And so we slept. From three o'clock in the afternoon until the stars came out to look at us, there on the grass we lay like drugged men, every bone in our bodies aching from the rigours of ten days and nights of rearguard actions and hasty retirements and endless journeyings through the night, famished, unwashed, and ever driven on by unseen menace ; we had climbed the hilly main street of Compiègne with only the promise of rest that afternoon keeping us from falling out of our saddles ; and now we were safe at last. We slept, and slept, and slept.

# A GRIM CROCODILE HUNT

*By*

F. A. M. HEDGES

*During a cruise lasting two years, during which he was occupied in deep-sea fishing and exploration work, Mr. Mitchell Hedges and his companion, Lady Richmond Brown, had several narrow escapes from death. He describes one here that happened while they were exploring the rivers of islands in the Gulf of Panama.*

**E**ARLY in the day we proceeded upstream. A very short distance ahead on the left bank we came to a little settlement.

They waved to us—our appearance was a break in the monotony of their lives. We stopped and gave them a few tins of corned beef, etc., their delight being almost pathetic.

As we continued on our way, numerous small streams ran into the main river, while the bush became denser the farther we got from the sea. About twelve miles from the mouth, we stopped at the entrance to a broad creek, and getting into the dinghy with our guns, determined to row up and hunt for crocodiles, or whatever else we might encounter in this virgin wild. Numbers of small blue-and-white cranes continually flew backwards and forwards, while gorgeous coloured butterflies and small birds flitted in and out amongst the bordering foliage. With a rushing sound a flock of duck, very like curlew, whistled close over our heads—so sudden was their appearance that I had no time to use my shot-gun, though they would have made a welcome addition to the pot. A little later, densely packed, I saw more coming, and this time I was ready for them, killing seven with one shot. When retrieved from the water into which they had fallen, we found several were pure white, with the long curved yellow beak of the

curlew, while others were brown. I should think they weighed over four pounds each, and no connoisseur could have found fault with the feast we had afterwards.

We traversed this stream until it narrowed to such an extent that we could go no farther, without seeing a sign of a crocodile ; but on our return, creeping along slowly, an ocelot dashed through the bush in full view, but its movement was too rapid to enable me to get a sight for the rifle.

After our return to the yacht, about two miles farther on we saw another little opening, but there was no mistake about what was lying on the mud flat at the entrance. As we approached closer, up went a hideous head, while a greyish mass slithered almost silently from off the ooze beneath the water. We counted nine thumping big crocodiles in all as we were approaching, but when we arrived not a sign of one was visible. The main channel here ran deep almost up to the banks, and we anchored about fifteen yards out.

" We'll not go up in the dinghy yet," I said to Lady Brown. " Let's have a little rifle practice from the deck—they're certain to return."

As I spoke, with hardly a ripple to denote its stealthy movement, the head and back of one of the saurians appeared floating on the water like a log. It was only about twenty yards away, and making up the creek. Sighting for the head, I fired. We plainly heard the smash of the bullet as it drove home, shattering the hard bone. In a boiling vortex the reptile vanished ; the head and the front feet rose again almost immediately, then slowly it sank, quite dead—the expanding '303 had done its work. The water was very shallow where it disappeared, and taking a rope in the dinghy, we rowed to the spot. On the mud beneath the surface it lay. It did not take long to get a hitch round it, and afterwards with much difficulty we dragged it into the still shallower water near the bank. The river here is tidal, so, when the falling tide left the carcass fully exposed, we were able to photograph it.

I had brought my rifle with me, so we paddled slowly up the creek. There is a sharp bend about three hundred yards from where it enters the main channel, and as we rounded this, behind some overhanging foliage within fifty yards of us lay three enormous crocodiles, basking quite unsuspectingly in the sun. They had not heard us, so stealthily had we crept up, and picking out the largest, I fired. With a grunt it reared in the air, sending the slime flying in all directions with its powerful tail. It struggled violently to reach the water, but I

saw it was mortally wounded and suddenly ceased to move. On getting close up it appeared to be a mighty specimen, measuring nearly twenty-two feet in length. It is curious what a fœtid smell these reptiles have even when alive, but the stench after they have been dead a couple of days is overpowering. It is unlike anything else, and is the most awful smell I know.

We continued up the creek, the scenery being really beautiful. Several large coco-nut palms had fallen over the stream, one which had dropped completely across making a wonderful natural bridge. Flowering vines and creepers had covered the trunk, and trailing to the water formed a perfect arch of exotic greenery. Just beyond this, on some exposed gnarled roots, we saw another crocodile, but took no notice of it—we wanted the really big ones, and rather despised a ten- or twelve-footer.

The banks were rapidly narrowing here, and lily-beds stretched across what little open space there was to navigate, until at last we found we could get no farther. The jungle appeared more open here, so we landed, keeping a wary eye for the deadly bush master snake, and the innumerable other dangers one usually finds in the primitive wilds. Both of us carried guns in our belts as well as a rifle, and of course we were wearing top-boots and breeches—the person who attempts to go through a jungle otherwise attired must be a double-distilled fool. The leather of the boot gives protection against snakes, centipedes, scorpions, as well as considerable help against the ticks which infest the more open country where long grass grows. We were badly bothered here by mosquitoes—I think every single classified member of the species occurs up the Bayano—and it would really seem as if there were a host of unknown varieties as well, but it is astonishing what one can get used to.

After we had penetrated for about two hundred yards we saw a family of racoons at play. They were going through the most amusing antics, rolling over together, jumping on top of one another, leaping into the air, little dreaming they were being watched by a two-legged animal. We left them in their happy state, though we could have killed them easily.

On coming to a patch of marshy ground, the trail of a large member of the cat family could plainly be seen. It must have been a very large one—judging by the size of its spoor a jaguar or puma, though here also can be found what is known as the

"black tiger." This is not a separate species, but merely a melanic form of jaguar.

There was nothing particularly interesting to be seen, and there was no object in meandering round to get eaten alive by insects ; we therefore returned to the dinghy, and so back to the yacht. When we reached the bend where I had killed the big crocodile in our passage up, we ceased rowing and crept slowly down by pulling ourselves along with the aid of the reeds and rushes which everywhere overhung the water. Cuddled in close to the bank we approached.

Ye gods ! What a sight ! The sun was now blazing down from overhead, turning the slime on the flattened bank into a species of hot mud-bath, and stretched out full length were no less than fifteen crocodiles wallowing and basking in blissful ignorance of our nearness.

"I really don't know whether it is safe to fire at the brutes while in this tiny cockleshell," I whispered.

Robbie, who accompanied me, was quite certain it would be madness—he had horrible visions of the reptiles coming down *en masse* at the charge.

"No," I said. "I think the game is really too risky : if we wounded one, the result would probably be disastrous, and it's no good taking unnecessary chances."

When we came out in full view from under the bank, these reptiles were certainly astonished, and made off full tilt into the water. The rate at which these brutes can travel is remarkable—though apparently so slothful, when necessity arises their movements are rapid in the extreme. One has only to think to realise this must be so, otherwise how would it be possible for them to catch fish, etc., on which they largely exist ?

After they had all disappeared, swimming ahead of us, as we could see from the bubbles and mud they turned up from the bottom, we followed. Close to the mouth of the creek the bank on the right-hand side is low and flat, with giant mangrove trees growing quite eighty to a hundred feet in the air, but on the opposite side the ground, steeply shelving, rises up about eight feet above the stream. As we drifted down, I noticed two or three of the big reptiles had crept up the slopes, and were lying asleep, almost covered by the dense bush on the top.

Standing up, I sighted as well as I could and fired. At once with a loud crashing of undergrowth, several shot over the edge, and with terrific plunges smashed into the water, but the one I had aimed at remained quite motionless.

"By Jove!" I exclaimed, "I've killed him stone dead."

We crossed over, and crawling up the side with difficulty, cautiously approached the inert form. There is no doubt I should have given it another bullet to make sure—we were practically up against it when it galvanised into life. We leaped backwards—I had no time to plug it again, and doubt whether, if it had attacked, we should have been able to save ourselves from the onslaught, but fortunately it didn't. With a rush it went over the edge—crash into the water below—my bullet had evidently only stunned it.

We were much shaken by this incident, for there are no more evil-looking brutes in this world than crocodiles or alligators, and to see this twenty-footer suddenly come to life when we were almost on top of it, was enough to shake anybody's nerves.

I have met many people in my life who have told me they have never known what fear meant and were afraid of nothing. I wished then that I were like them, for I have certainly known fear. I think I am really a timid man, and rather believe at times I have been downright cowardly; but certain it is that *I can imagine no more horrible death than being seized, carried underneath the water, and subsequently devoured by one of these filthy reptiles.* Of the two, I really fancy I prefer the shark.

We did no more shooting. After getting on board we sat drinking tea and admiring the beauties of the river. As the sun set, innumerable birds from every direction commenced to congregate in the mangrove trees on the shore close to us. At last such numbers assembled that every branch seemed alive with them, the blue-and-white cranes, curlew-like duck, and crab-catchers all making this their nocturnal resting-place. Overhead numbers of parrots crossed the river, filling the air with their curious medley of sound, and as darkness closed in, the stillness and peace of the utter wilds settled upon us. Fire-flies and fire-beetles flew among the trees and bushes, flashing like meteors. Every now and then the heavy splash of a crocodile and the harsh strident shrieks of a variety of night-birds would jar the silence.

We were badly worried by mosquitoes at night—such a pest were they that when we arose at daybreak we were not very much refreshed by our broken sleep.

Before the sun sucked up the vapours, a heavy miasmatic mist, like the steam of a Turkish bath, covered everything. In the grey of the morning all things are grey, and there was



very little difference between the atmosphere and our own feelings. However, after some good hot coffee and a substantial breakfast we felt better, determined to have another day's hunting, and decided to row up to where we had seen the fifteen crocodiles the afternoon before. Just before we reached the place we came upon a low-lying bank on which lay a big crocodile. Up till then it had not seen us, but just as I was about to pull on it, off it moved. I let fly, but did not see where the bullet struck, though I knew from the surge of water and smashing of its tail I had found my mark. As we rowed forward to look for it, we were all three nearly shot out of the boat. Right beneath us the crocodile, which had only been wounded, rose, at the same time lashing with its tail, flooding us with water—then came at us with mouth wide open. Its dripping jaws were within a foot of Lady Brown, who was sitting in the stern. The enraged brute, I thought, must surely seize her, and overturn us.

I could not fire—she was almost dead in line, and with the rocking of the boat it would have been madness to risk it. With remarkable presence of mind, without hesitating a second (if she had it would certainly have meant death for her), she whipped the automatic from her belt, and fired three times into the gaping horrible mouth, and as it swirled away from the shock, I snapped it with my rifle, and knew by the thud that I had got home. Lady Brown was as white as a sheet, and I was shaking as if with ague.

"My God!" I said, "that's the nearest thing I've ever seen! If you hadn't used your automatic, nothing could have saved you."

The body had sunk out of sight, and try as we could we were unable to recover it. We were much too shaken to hunt further, so returned to the *Cara*.

That afternoon, from the security of the deck, we killed no less than five, and the next day ran up to where the Mamoni river joins the Bayano. The former has a considerable breadth and flow, but where it enters the main channel, beware! For most unexpectedly, right in the centre, a great rock juts up. At high water it is about three feet below the surface, though when the tide falls the danger is fully exposed. When we arrived here fortunately we could see it. It certainly would mean the complete wreck of any boat that unknowingly drove on to it.

We went up the Mamoni for some distance, but found nothing of particular interest. Anchoring that night at the

mouth, we returned next day to the creek, where we had so narrowly escaped death from the wounded crocodile. I had had enough of shooting here, but badly wanted to get some curlew duck, whose favourite feeding-ground I knew was where the stream narrowed, and went up after them in the dinghy. We got about eight, and were returning when, floating upstream we saw a strange sight—a dead crocodile with the yellowish white belly uppermost; and perched on it were nine vultures endeavouring to tear it open from the vent. It passed close to us, the birds not taking the slightest notice, or concerning themselves in the least at our presence.

“ I wonder if that’s the brute that attacked us ? ” I said.

Driving off the filthy passengers, we got hold of it by the tail and pulled it to the shore. Sure enough it was the very one—there could not be the slightest mistake about it, for on prising open its jaws, inside were the marks that were clear evidence of Lady Brown’s automatic. We made up our minds to preserve the head as a memento of our narrow escape. After a lot of trouble I managed to sever it, though the stench was abominable.

Just before we arrived back on the yacht I noticed in some reeds the first really small one I had seen. Picking up my shotgun, I waited until we had crept up within six feet of it—then fired into the water close to the head. As I had hoped, the concussion momentarily stunned it, and we grabbed the little devil, and put it in the dinghy.

“ What are we going to do with it ? ” asked Lady Brown.

“ I’m going to get a really good photograph, and want to take you holding it—it’ll come to life presently.”

I showed her how it would have to be held to prevent it biting.

We got the big head on to the yacht, and put it up in the bow, with Lady Brown sitting in the capstan.

Sure enough, the little crocodile presently woke up.

“ Now hold it against you,” I said, “ and the camera will do the rest.”

In the first photograph its mouth was shut, but in the second it started to press against her, making a thin wheezing noise. I got two really excellent pictures, and as a reward for its good behaviour we pitched the little beggar back into the river. I don’t think I should have done so, for I hate the brutes, but Lady Brown seemed to think it had earned its freedom.

# WHEN AL CAPONE WAS AMBUSHED

By

JACK BILBO

*When he was twenty, Jack Bilbo, was "stuck up" and robbed by an American gangster on Broadway. A week or so later, down and out, he meets this same ganster again, who gives him food and offers him work with "the gangs." Not until this German boy has been working with them for some time does he learn that he is part of Al Capone's giant organisation. His story opens now, when O'Connor, one of Al Capone's lieutenants, got him enrolled in the Boss's personal bodyguard.*

At eleven-thirty O'Connor came to the house and called me. "I have told the Boss about you," he said. "You are to start work in his bodyguard on trial. I hope that all will go well."

We started off with Conny—eight of us—in two cars. On the way Conny explained my new work to me.

"The bodyguard is responsible for the safety of the Boss," he said. "Your job is based on the assumption that his life is always being threatened, usually by enemy gangs but sometimes by the police. We gangsters can't even trust the police these days—one of them may take a shot at the Boss some time. There are thirty-six men in the bodyguard and eighteen of them are on duty each week. Six men, with a leader, are always on duty in his home or in his office; the watch changes every eight hours. In your spare time you can do outside 'jobs' if you want to, but nothing that will bring you in danger." He paused, then continued, emphasising every word, "Remember—no stranger is allowed closer to the Boss than five paces. If any one acts suspiciously, shoot him first and ask questions afterwards."

Conny introduced me to the man sitting next to me, a

swarthy individual called "The Captain," who looked like a Mexican. I learned later that he came from St. Louis and had been in Mexico in some bandit gang or other. "You keep an eye on young Sauerkraut," Conny told him. The Captain gave me two passwords, the names of flowers, "phlox" and "daisy."

As we travelled through the streets of Chicago to Capone's home I noticed that we were not bound towards one of the better residential districts, where I had supposed Capone would live, but towards the better part of the business section. We stopped in front of a three-storey building, where no one would have expected to find a private apartment. Two small signs announced that the building contained the offices of a wholesale stocking firm and of "Smith and Weber." As I found later, both firms actually existed and did a regular and good business. But the stocking agency served as a weapon storage place for Capone, while "Smith and Weber" were used as a secret address.

We entered the vestibule of the building. A gigantic negro operated the extraordinarily big elevator that we found there. I saw no signs of any staircase, and learned later that there was none. As the elevator moved slowly upwards the negro telephoned to somewhere from a phone in the elevator.

We arrived at the third floor and stepped out into a tiny vestibule that scarcely held the eight of us. A massive bronze door barred our way. It had neither lock nor handle on the outside, and could be opened only from within. Suddenly, without a sound, the door opened, sliding into the wall.

An Asiatic of some nationality received us, a man of uncertain age, dressed in dark-blue livery. I found later that he was a Siamese. He led us down a corridor, walking noiselessly on cork soles. I tried to imitate his quiet walk; the others tramped along noisily. As we passed through the hall I saw into one room, through the open door. It was furnished with Renaissance furniture. Then we came to a large, well-lighted room at the end of the corridor, likewise furnished in Renaissance. Before the big window, at a huge desk, sat a man, his back to us. I saw that his head was big, humpy, covered by thick black hair. His head was slightly drawn in between the wide shoulders and rested on a short, bull-like neck.

The man rose quietly and, for his weight of two hundred pounds, lightly. He was about five feet seven in height. He came towards us, smiling, walking with long, sure strides. He wore a dark suit elegantly cut, a flashy tie. He greeted all of

us, shaking hands all round, first with Conny and last with me.

"You are the German boy?" he asked, with a deep, almost hoarse, voice.

"Yes."

"Were you in the War?" he continued, asking the same questions which Alphonso had asked.

"I was too young."

"The Germans were good fighters," he remarked.

Most of the pictures of Capone do not show him as he is. True, he did have a certain animal-like wildness in his face, but a wildness reminiscent of a wild-cat rather than of a gorilla. He carried his head erect, despite his short neck. His round head, seen from the front, was impressive—strongly protruding cheek-bones, energetic chin, hair slightly receding, black bushy eyebrows almost grown together. His eyes were small, with a very white background that offset the brown pupils. His glance was piercing, strong, cunning, and a trifle sad. His nose was flat, sensual. His mouth was big, broad, thick, and his under-lip curved as if in scorn. His teeth were very white and almost carnivorous. A scar ran down the length of his left cheek, a scar received in a fight in a Brooklyn bar-room long ago. His face had a dull dark-blue shadow from his heavy beard. His features were so large that everything except his nose seemed overproportioned. He is distinctly an Italian type, but not thoroughbred; other blood has flowed in the veins of some of his ancestors.

After greeting us, Capone sat down again at his desk and put a menthol cigarette between his lips. He began talking with Conny. Three of us were sent out to wait in another room.

This room was also furnished in Renaissance style, and on examination I found that the furniture was genuine. All around us were bookcases; I found later that it was Capone's library.

"We can't hear anything of what's going on in the other room," I said to one man called "The Count." "Supposing Capone wanted us?"

The Count, without a word, pointed to an alarm bell overhead.

I stepped up to the bookcases to see what Capone liked to read. The Count smiled. "You'll find the Boss has good taste," he said.

First I saw a big collection of erotic books. There were a

lot of books with valuable old prints. I saw a large number of books about Napoleon, some of them in expensive bindings. One book, *The Sayings of Napoleon*, seemed to have been often read. There were expensive and cheap things jumbled together and books on every possible subject—scientific business management, salesmanship, anarchism, naval warfare, architecture, grape-growing, history of the Civil War, books by Roosevelt, Ford, Mark Twain, Upton Sinclair, Stevenson, Hergeshimer, and Karl Marx. Everything was in English except for some of the French erotics. If the owner of this library had only read one-third of the books he could not be called an uneducated person.

I was glancing through one of the erotic books when the door behind us suddenly opened and Capone burst into the room, his face livid. He waved a crumpled newspaper.

"It's enough to make you go nuts," he said, "when fellows like this Michael Hughes use my good name to make shabby publicity for themselves. I have never seen this fellow Hughes, and he had better not let me see him. He can be fresh, but not more than that. Look at this!" He pointed to a headline:

"HUGHES, POLICE COMMISSIONER, SAYS HE HAS STOPPED WORK OF CAPONE AND GANG IN CHICAGO AND COOK COUNTY!"

"All I can say is that if he wants to do that he'll have to get up a hell of a lot earlier," Capone said, dropping into an arm-chair. He continued to fume. A telephone call took him back to his room.

"I'd not like to be in Hughes's shoes," I said to the other two in the room.

"You wouldn't risk much at that," said the other man, a tall blond called Andy. "You probably don't know who made this Hughes Police Commissioner. Big Bill Thompson did it—Big Bill, the new mayor of Chicago, who is going to keep King George's snout out of American affairs, and who declared just yesterday that he was as wet and wetter than the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. And who had Big Bill elected? Who defeated Dever? The Boss!"

"That's right," said the Count.

"Yah," Andy continued. "Then this louse Thompson, after election, said that he wouldn't prosecute small alcohol cookers and bootleggers, but that he would drive 'Crime and Capone' out of Chicago. That's us! Drive out those who had him elected! A lot of words—that's all, and the same with

this Hughes. They just get publicity this way. We're here, and we stay here—no matter what these little newspaper fleas may write. But what makes the Boss sore is that Hughes used to be one of the best customers in Higgins's money-lending bureau. If the Boss wanted to, he could write a nice little piece about Hughes for the papers."

"Hughes is in luck," said the Count. "The Boss has more to worry about now than about him."

"Yes," said Andy. "There are strange gunmen in this city—Aiello's men, from St. Louis, New York, and Cleveland, who would like to get Capone. The gangster armistice is perforated like the hide of a hijacker. Competition for business is active again, and some of these strangers have even dared to turn up in the 42nd and 43rd Wards—Capone's own district! Hymie Weiss, the only one who could have hurt us, is dead. The Boss to-day controls all that was allotted to him by the armistice, and probably more, but new gangs with ambitions are being formed out of the remnants of the old O'Bannion crowd, and their goal is to get Capone."

"And just think," the Count chimed in, "we can't ask Mr. Hughes to protect us!"

"Him?" Andy asked. "We can look out for ourselves. Hughes doesn't know anything. Wouldn't the famous Mr. Hughes like to know the identity of the well-dressed man with the big diamond ring on his hand and the roll of bills in his pocket who was found dead in the Loop the other day? Ten bullets in his body. Hughes couldn't give you his name any more than he could name the man who shot him. To hell with Hughes! We've got these strange mugs to look out for."

"During the armistice not a shot was fired in Chicago for ninety days, Sauerkraut," the Count explained.

"Those days are over," Andy added. "We may have some hot times again."

They laughed, and I laughed with them. I didn't quite understand all this, for some of the links were missing. I had to understand how all these things fitted together. Sooner than I hoped I was to find out—in theory and in practice

\* \* \* \* \*

The Captain stepped into the room.

"Hurry up, boys. The Boss is going to 'Poor Mike's.' Is everything ready, German?"

In two seconds we were in the hall. Without a sound the bronze door opened. At a signal the Count and I jumped on the small platform between the door and the elevator. Im-

mediately after us the Boss stepped out and behind him the others. Capone was laughing.

At the kerb a dark-blue sedan was waiting. Capone jumped lightly into it. The Captain put George in the front seat, beside the chauffeur, while he, Andy, and I sat in the rear with Capone. Two men, mounted on motor-cycles, followed right behind us. "You watch the left side of the road," the Captain said curtly to me.

I sat in my place, my eyes focused on the road as we sped by, ready to shoot at the slightest sign of trouble. But there was nothing suspicious in sight. With great speed we travelled along the Lake boulevard, bound for out of town.

"Lovely weather," said Capone suddenly.

We "Yessed" him and continued our silent watch.

We left the city and hit the open road. On each side were trees and shrubbery. We had not gone far when *it* happened, and it happened so quickly that it is difficult to remember all the details.

I was conscious of a fast car overtaking us. As it passed the car seemed to spurt streaks of fire. The noise of shooting rose above the whirr of the motor.

At the first shot Andy and the Captain threw themselves on Capone. I also covered him instinctively with my body. Andy had one hand free and was firing at the black car that stayed beside us. I did the same.

Suddenly George, in front, slumped in his seat, and blood spurted from his head. A moment later our chauffeur dropped over the wheel. Our car swerved, skidded, and turned over.

And all this had happened in about twenty seconds!

The time it took us to scramble out of our car seemed like an eternity of torture. Once out we kept shooting at the black car, now slowing down ahead of us, but we were badly covered. We made for the trees beside the road. The road which had been full of passing cars a few moments before was now desolate. A hundred feet away the black car was stopping. The two motor-cycle men had not chased it, but were with us.

"Come on to the black car," Capone ordered, taking command.

The six of us, keeping as well covered as possible, sneaked from tree to tree and from bush to bush, firing at the car as we advanced. One of the motor-cycle men, Sascha, led the line. He was the first to reach the last tree before the car. He acted as feeler, as periscope. He stuck his head out from behind the tree, but jerked it back quickly as if he did not



trust the seeming lack of fire from the black car. Then with one step he jumped at the car. I loaded my gun for the third time. Capone, in front of me, was hurrying to the car, his face as emotionless as a steel plate.

We had nothing further to fear from that black car. We peered inside. Nothing stirred within it. But there lay four men in little pools of blood. We did not recognise any of them.

"These men are not gangsters," Capone said suddenly, breaking a long silence. "In the first place, they didn't work quickly and smoothly enough to be gangsters. Search them quickly."

For the first time in my life I searched the pockets of a corpse. I found nothing. There was nothing to identify the men in the pockets of any of them.

"Let's get to the hospital with our men," Capone commanded. "We have to get away from here immediately."

It was dangerous for us to stay around. We found that our chauffeur was dead, so we left him in the overturned car. Sascha and George were wounded, and badly. I had been slightly grazed by a bullet. I carried George on my shoulder. He was unconscious and like a sack of lead. We had to move slowly along the road. Not a person was in sight, although the road was lined with houses. Strange to say there was no sign of the police either.

"Where can Commissioner Hughes be?" Capone asked mockingly.

Suddenly a taxi turned from a side street into the road we were travelling. Sighting us, the car made a wild attempt to turn and to head in the other direction. We must have looked pretty wild, or perhaps the driver saw me carrying George and thought that he was dead. Andy fired one shot into the air and the taxi stopped.

The Boss went to the driver and handed him a ten-dollar bill. The Captain opened the door and we got in somehow. We put George between Andy and myself. The taxi-driver beat it and the Captain drove.

After ten minutes George showed some signs of consciousness. Andy pulled out a flask and poured whisky into him.

Suddenly George put his hand to his head.

"Where the hell is my left ear?" he asked angrily.

It was gone—shot off.

George cursed so completely and satisfactorily that we knew that he was in no serious danger.

"Better have no ears at all," Andy said to him, "than to



*Six of us sneaked from tree to tree firing as we advanced.*



have the kind you had, like your right ear, that sticks out at right angles. No wonder your left ear stopped a bullet."

I was not afraid for George now. But Sascha was in a serious condition. I asked Andy if the hospital to which we were going was dependable, meaning whether it took good care of its patients. Andy misunderstood me.

"You bet it's dependable," he said. "We control it. No police can get into it."

George seemed to have recovered, but Sascha was groaning. Andy tried to fix him up with an emergency bandage, but his pain was terrible. The second half of our journey was covered in silence.

Capone had said nothing the whole way. Suddenly he let out one loud curse, and added, "I know! We have received threats from the Ku-Klux-Klan. It wants to rid America of me. Well, they'll have to learn to shoot better first." He said no more.

We fell back on our own thoughts. The hospital was an attractive two-storey building, built in colonial style, standing back from the road. Two nurses and a stretcher gang took charge of George and Sascha. It was in this same hospital that "Poor Mike" lay. Capone asked the number of his room and went up to it with the Captain. We stayed in the hospital and drank whisky.

In ten minutes the Boss was back. He looked gloomy and silent and none of us dared to question him. We were in the car and on our way to Chicago before he said a word.

"'Poor Mike' is dead," he stated simply. "He was a good gunman."

# MY WORST JOURNEY

By

“TAFFRAIL”

A PART from one or two expeditions to the Skager Rack, when we had a severe pounding, I think the worst trip I ever experienced in a destroyer was in January 1918, when, in the *Telemachus*, we were ordered to proceed north-about from the Firth of Forth to Avonmouth for our biennial refit. Avonmouth was at the very opposite end of the British Isles—690 miles if we went round the north of Scotland and through the Irish Sea; about sixty miles more *via* the east coast of England and the Channel.

Having arrived in harbour at 7 a.m. after three days' buffeting at sea, we received orders a few hours later to sail at 5.30 p.m. The weather was vile, with a strong north-easterly breeze and occasional flurries of snow and sleet, so thick that they shut out all view of the Forth Bridge, about half a mile downstream. It was a filthy day. The needle of the aneroid had been travelling anti-clockwise for thirty-six hours, and still continued to fall. I heard the quartermaster of the forenoon watch, a hoary-headed mariner, sucking his teeth with astonishment when he gazed at it at about noon to enter the reading in the deck log.

“What's the matter, Jevons?” I asked him.

“I can't make it out no'ow, sir,” he replied, tapping the glass with a gloved finger. “I've never seen the likes of it—goin' backwards all the time. Maybe it's out of order, sir.”

I shook my head. The aneroid was telling a dismal tale; but it was a true one.

We were in for a dusting.

We got it.

## II

BY 5.40 p.m., at which time it was dark, we were steaming Bunder the great arch of the Forth Bridge with the white, red, white lights glimmering high overhead to show that the inner

anti-submarine net had been lowered for our benefit. Steaming on past a line of lighted buoys to starboard, we came to the inner boom, its southern entrance marked by trawlers showing red and green lights. We passed on through the outer gate, increased speed to twenty knots, and were soon abeam of Inchkeith, whose searchlight promptly demanded our name. There were still the outer anti-submarine defences to be negotiated, the heavy boom and nets between Elie and Fidra Island, almost at the entrance to the Firth.

Getting in or out of the Firth of Forth in wartime was not particularly easy. Four separate systems of anti-submarine defences had to be passed through. It was as well. On 2nd September 1914, late at night, the German submarine U.21, commanded by Lieutenant Hersing, had crept up as far as the Forth Bridge before she was detected. Unable to attack the men-of-war above it, she was forced to retreat, and three days later sank the first man-of-war ever destroyed by a torpedo fired from a submarine. This was the light-cruiser *Pathfinder*, torpedoed off St. Abb's Head on the afternoon of 5th September 1914.

About two hours after leaving our buoy we were passing May Island, the light on which was shown for our especial benefit. We fixed our position accurately, switched off navigation lights, steamed on for a mile or two, and then altered course to the northward up the Scottish coast.

Shore lights were not ordinarily displayed in wartime as they helped enemy submarines. There were no outlying dangers, however, beyond the Bell Rock, off which we were steering well clear. We had asked for the lights at Girdleness, near Aberdeen, and Rattray Head and Kinnaird Head, farther north, to be shown between certain stated times, allowing for a speed of twenty knots. The wind, still blowing very hard, was in the north-north-west. We were anxious to make good going while under the lee of the coast. Once past Kinnaird Head and into the open stretch of water off the Moray Firth, we might expect a heavy sea. I was aiming to make Duncansby Head, at the eastern end of the Pentland Firth, soon after daybreak.

For over a hundred miles the going was good, for there was nothing really vicious about the sea. But the cold was uncomfortable. The thermometer was well below 32° with the spray freezing as it fell. Moreover, we had frequent snow-squalls, until the bridge and mast were well covered in ice.

We duly sighted Girdleness, Rattray Head, and Kinnaird Head lights, and at about 1.20 a.m. altered course to the north-north-west for Duncansby Head, about eighty miles on. Almost as soon as we left the shelter of the land the sea became heavier and steeper, and the old ship began to tumble about with a violent corkscrew motion as only a destroyer can. We had eased to fourteen knots; but, even so, the ship was pitching heavily into the head sea, flinging her bows dizzily into the air at one moment, and under water the next. Occasional green seas smashed over the fore-castle and thudded against the bridge, while the spray drove over in sheets and stung our faces like hail.

It was blowing very hard, with the wind booming and shrilling through our scanty rigging. Ahead, the sea was faintly phosphorescent. I could see nothing but a confused maelstrom of leaping white, and the foaming summits of the nearer waves as they drove towards us. The upper deck was constantly buried in breaking water as it surged on board and went racing madly aft. The ship was bumping badly, sometimes flinging her stern out of water until the propellers raced madly in air. There was nothing for it but to ease down.

We tried her at twelve knots; but even this was too much. We eased to ten, at which she no longer crashed and threatened to break herself in halves. She rode easier, though the motion was still frightful.

Pyke, the pale-faced, seasick signalman, was crouched over a bucket in the tail of the bridge. He was never happy at sea, poor fellow, and, glancing at him, I thought of what it must be like on the fœtid, sloppy mess-decks under the fore-castle. Contrary to popular belief, a good many sailors are still seasick, even destroyer sailors.

Turning the ship over to the officer of the watch, I retired to the chart-house below the bridge, to find the usual scene of desolation. The violent rolling and pitching had unshipped every movable fitting from its place and had hurled it on to the deck. A trickle of dirty water from a faulty pipe connection in the roof dripped steadily on to the cushioned settee which served as my bed. The two steel doors, normally watertight, admitted streams of water every time a sea broke on board.

It was cold and damp and miserable. The drawers under the chart-table containing the chart folios were slowly disgorging their contents on to the already littered deck covered

with six inches of dirty water swishing dismally from side to side. It was a gruesome sight.

I salvaged some books, some bound copies of Sailing Directions, an unbroken cup, a tin of biscuits, my spare sea-boots, the sub-lieutenant's sextant, a pair of parallel rulers, and a tin of cigarettes. But no sooner had I wedged them in what I fondly imagined were safe positions than they fell down again. Rather than wedge the books in the bookshelf over the settee, where, as likely as not, they would work themselves loose and descend in an avalanche on my head as I tried to sleep, I let them lie.

Taking off my dripping oilskins and sodden muffler, I arrayed myself in a tolerably dry "lammy coat" and tapped on the little window of the wireless-office behind the chart-house.

It flicked open, to display the red face of Biddle, the leading telegraphist, with a pair of telephone receivers clipped over his ears. Biddle enjoyed what is popularly known as a "fug." His cubby-hole was perhaps six feet square, littered all over with the mysterious instruments of his calling, and with just sufficient room on the deck for a chair, a desk, and a box of confidential books. With all his ventilators tight shut, the electric light blazing, the radiator full on, and the ship rolling and pitching drunkenly, he was literally stewing in his own juice. Biddle had a hardened stomach, and was even smoking. But the wave of heated air which smote me in the face caused me to step back hastily. It smelt of overheated humanity, damp serge, acrid cigarette smoke, and the stench of hot metal.

"Aren't you rather hot in there?" I asked him.

Biddle laughed. Indeed no, he replied, it was just nice and snug.

"Has anything been coming through?" I inquired.

"Nothing much, sir," he answered. "Some of the destroyer patrols in the Pentland Firth have been reporting very bad weather, that's all. They've been ordered to return to base."

I groaned inwardly. In eight hours or so we should be in the Pentland Firth ourselves. If the patrols had been withdrawn, it meant we were in for a real snorter.



## III

WHEN daylight came at about 7.30, land was in sight on the port bow. It was not until two hours later, however, that we rounded Duncansby Head and altered course to the westward through the Pentland Firth.

It was a grey morning, with a few stray gleams of wintry sunlight flickering through the dark snow-clouds scurrying down from windward on the wings of the gale. The sea, with the wind blowing against the tide, was very confused. The waves rose and fell in no regular cadence, rearing themselves up perpendicularly to topple in yeasty white. At times, charging furiously together, the spray of their impact went hurtling to leeward in sheets of flying spindrift. The wind, if anything, had increased.

We staggered on through the Firth. Land lay on both sides. On the starboard bow, within a mile and a half, was the rocky islet of Swona, veined with the snow lying in its gullies and its low summit covered with a mantle of white. Beyond, from right ahead to well abaft the starboard beam, lay Hoy, Flotta Island, and South Ronaldshay, the southern islands of the Orkney group guarding the great expanse of Scapa Flow. Looking through glasses, one could see masts just showing over the distant hills, for inside, in the land-locked anchorage, lay the Grand Fleet.

The hills and mountains looked very bleak and barren, tier upon tier of white-capped hummocks fading into the dim distance, their lower slopes streaked with lying snow. The mountains of Hoy, fine on the starboard bow, shone intensely white when touched by the errant gleams of sunlight, then disappeared altogether as the dense snow flurries drove down from the northward.

On our port bow lay Stroma with its lighthouse, and beyond, terminating to the west in the bold mass of Dunnet Head, was the mainland of Scotland, Caithness. It was a forbidding-looking shore, the wind-driven water surging madly against the rocks off the sheer cliffs.

The Pentland Firth had always had an evil reputation among seamen. Its tides are strong; its eddies and whirlpools uncertain. Even great battleships, for no apparent reason, have been suddenly swirled through a right angle or more out of their course. But in a gale of wind its dangers are magnified a hundredfold. The tide sometimes runs at

ten knots, and the wind, blowing against it, is apt to raise a toppling sea sufficient to overwhelm an ill-found vessel. Many a light-cruiser or destroyer has limped into Scapa Flow with her bridge beaten flat, and boats, and possibly men, washed overboard. Even a battleship, steaming westward against a gale, had her bridge completely removed by an enormous sea which broke on board in a liquid avalanche and flooded the ship with hundreds of tons of water.

So it behoved us to be careful.

It would be dark by 4 p.m. I had no wish to struggle on during the night through the Minch and Little Minch, between the Outer Hebrides and the west coast of Scotland. Lights were few and far between, and the Shiant Islands lay right in mid-channel. If we did ask for the lights to be shown, we might never sight them if it really came on to snow. What we had in mind was to push on as fast as possible during the day, so as to arrive before dark at Loch Ewe, some fifty miles down the coast from Cape Wrath. There we would spend the night.

Alas for our good intentions !

Once out of the lee of the Orkneys the sea rapidly got worse. We were steaming along towards Cape Wrath with the gale on our starboard beam and nothing between us and Iceland. Seldom have I experienced such motion. Yawing wildly in her course, the ship was rolling as much as fifty degrees to leeward. We had to lash ourselves on to the bridge rails to remain upright.

One is accused of exaggeration if one describes a sea as "mountainous," though mountainous, compared with ourselves, this sea certainly seemed to be—great hills of grey water streaked and topped with white which seemed to reach as high as our masthead as we sank into the valleys between them. The ship, borne skywards on a crest, leant drunkenly over on her side and seemed to slide down the next watery abyss. Occasionally, as a comber caught her bows and drove her off her course, the forecastle buried itself in the water and the stern was well in the air, with the rudder and propellers useless, while her midship portion, straddled awkwardly across the back of the wave, would be overwhelmed in a boiling cataract eight feet deep. Then, as the sea drove on and the bows lifted, the stern fell into the next hollow, and another watery avalanche broke over our tail.

We were battened down, with life-lines rigged along the deck. Even so, it was only possible to get from aft forward,

or *vice versa*, by watching for a lull and taking a chance of being washed overboard. If any one had gone, no boat could have been lowered to rescue him. We should have had to try picking him up from the ship.

The sea had already made a clean sweep of the canopies over the wardroom and cabin hatches in the stern. I had no wish to see the flimsy circular hatches beaten in, and the stern compartments flooded.

But what could one do ?

The helmsmen did their utmost to keep the ship on her course. If they could keep her from yawing, things were more or less satisfactory beyond the rolling, and we took no heavy water on board. The wheel was never still ; but there was no holding her within thirty or forty degrees of her course as she was buffeted alternately on bow and stern. She was here, there, and everywhere. Wet through and numb with cold, the quartermasters were soon tired out. We had them relieved every half-hour.

We were moving along in a sort of zigzag crawl. It was manifestly impossible to reach Loch Ewe before dark. What should we do ?

I made up my mind to anchor in some sheltered anchorage that we could reach before dark, and to sail again next morning. Whatever happened, I was determined not to attempt the Minches by night.

Going down to the chart-house and hanging on by our eyelids, the first lieutenant and myself hauled out a chart or two and examined the Sailing Directions. The nearest anchorage was twelve miles down the coast from Cape Wrath, and its name was Loch Inchard. It was a narrow fiord about four miles long, "little used by shipping," said the Sailing Directions, "partly in consequence of the entrance being difficult to make out from seaward." Moreover, it seemed that the average width of the loch was little more than six hundred yards, while within half a mile of the entrance lay the unmarked Bodha Ceann na Salie, a submerged rock with a least depth of twelve feet. The *Telemachus* drew fourteen and a half feet of water to the tips of her propellers.

On the whole, Loch Inchard did not sound particularly inviting, though it did afford a sheltered anchorage farther up which should be unaffected by any wind that blew. But it was literally the only port in a storm—Hobson's choice. We made up our mind to go there

We staggered on towards Cape Wrath—rolling, lurching,

and pitching, flung about like an empty cask in the great seas. The snow seemed to be increasing, for frequent squalls shut down the visibility to a few hundred yards. In the intervals we could see the coast to port. Its snow-covered mountains, dark cliffs, and welter of breaking water looked grim and menacing, altogether horrible.

The distance from the Pentland Firth to Cape Wrath is a bare sixty miles. It was the longest sixty miles I have ever travelled!

The galley fire had long since been put out by a sea, so that hot food was impossible. When I sent for the coxswain to inquire as to what had been done about the men's dinner, he grinned sadly and replied that most of them required no nourishment at all. They wished to lie down and die, and that speedily. For those who were strong enough to eat, we contrived hot cocoa and thick bully-beef sandwiches—that and their rum ration. My own lunch, eaten on the bridge, consisted of slightly thinner sandwiches well flavoured with sea-water.

It was not until 2.30 that we saw the irregular hummock of Cape Wrath with the lighthouse on its summit. Seldom have I seen a spectacle to compare with the sight of the huge seas breaking against that wall of dark cliff. Great hillocks flung themselves at its rocky base, to burst in upheavals of spray a full seventy feet high. The body of each wave, recoiling seaward after its fruitless effort to breach the solid rock, impacted against its successor, so that the coast was fringed with half a mile of whitened, leaping water which rioted in all directions, tumbling, playing madly. It was fascinating to watch. I began to realise then why some mediaeval mariner, clawing his way round that promontory in his crazy sailing-ship, had christened it Cape Wrath.

Passing it by, we gradually hauled round to the southward. I looked anxiously aft as we turned, for the alteration of course would bring the stern swinging into the sea. For a few moments all went well. Then, as luck would have it, the bows lifted on the back of a huge wave, and the stern sank into the next hollow. A hillock of grey water, steep and sheer like a wall, white-capped and foaming, towered up astern and started gradually to overtake us. I watched it, fascinated. For a few breathless moments it hung there, its crest overhanging the quarterdeck by fully twenty feet. It came nearer—nearer. Would the stern never rise?

'Then the after part of the ship started to lift ever so slowly.

But it was too late. The curling summit of the sea tottered, fell on board with a crash which made the whole ship tremble.

For what seemed an eternity the after part of the ship remained buried in the heart of the sea. All I could see was the mizzen-mast standing up out of the whitened water. We had sent down a message for nobody to remain on the upper deck before we altered course, and I prayed fervently that no man was on the quarterdeck when that wave overwhelmed it. Then the stern rose, the water cascading forward and overboard in a miniature Niagara.

We increased speed to fifteen knots. The ship yawed wildly; but the increase certainly saved us from being "pooped" again.

The shore, composed of peculiar reddish cliff, was only a couple of miles or so to port. We sped by a ten-fathom patch upon which the seas, suddenly checked in their deep-water stride, burst furiously. We passed a rocky little island, its rounded summit almost obliterated in sheets of flying spray.

But half an hour later we had steered in towards the land and were steaming by Eileen an Roin—the Island of the Seals—at the entrance to our harbour. Once under the lee of the land the sea started to go down, and a few minutes later we were travelling up the narrow inlet of Loch Inchar with the snow-covered hills on either side. The gale, whistling round the gullies, sent the powdery snow flying. But in the sheltered loch the water was flat calm. The ship was on an even keel again.

We steamed on, hugging the shore to port to avoid the rocks in mid-channel, and passing two little clusters of houses which looked more like Esquimaux *igloos* than civilised habitations. The ship's company, rubbing their eyes, came on deck and looked about them. Their cigarettes and pipes appeared.

A boatswain's pipe twittered:

"Ha-and's bring ship to an anchor!"

Five minutes later the engines were stopped, and the anchor went to the bottom with the cheerful rattle of cable.

I fixed the position of the ship on the chart by cross-bearings, waited until she had "got" her cable, and then left the bridge. Half-way down the ladder I had an inspiration, and called to the coxswain.

"Sir?"

"Issue an extra rum ration at supper-time."

"Extra rum ration, sir!" he started to object. "We can't—"

"We will!" I cut him short. "If the powers that be ask you why, refer them to me."

"Aye, aye, sir," he replied, not at all displeased.

I went to my cabin to change into something dry, perhaps to have a bath. But the moment I saw the stern at close quarters I knew the worst. Practically everything except the after gun had been swept overboard, even the after binnacle.

The wardroom, two feet deep in water, was a scene of chaos. I swallowed some raw whisky, and retired to my cabin, to find it even worse. My steward, busy with a bucket and my bath sponge, was trying to compete with the flood. All my most treasured possessions had been hurled to the deck. Books, boots, and clothing had joined forces on the floor with my typewriter, all the contents of the drawers in my writing-table, and the half-finished manuscript of a book whereof all the typing had run.

It was a grisly scene.

I got my bath two hours later.

The thermometer was still below freezing.

I did not escape a raging cold in the head which lasted the whole of my ten days' leave.

My typewriter was never quite the same afterwards. Undoubtedly it was our worst journey.

#### IV

AT eight next morning, fortified after a night's rest, we resumed our journey southward. The gale still raged furiously, but the wind and sea were astern. In the intervals between the snow-squalls the sun shone out in a pale blue sky.

We went on at twenty knots, and by 11.30 were steaming down the Inner Sound between Raasay and the mainland, with the hills on either hand. Far away to starboard the snow-clad mountains of Skye shimmered silver-blue and gold, as if cast in solid ice. Through the Kyle of Loch Alsh and the narrows of Kyle Akin to Sleat Sound. Then on through a stretch of open water, past the islands of Rum and Eigg and Muck—delicious names—to Ardnamurchan Point.

At 2.30 we were abreast of Tobermory on our way down the Sound of Mull. At anchor inside the little harbour was a convoy of colliers, oilers, and storeships on their way up to the Grand Fleet, escorted by a couple of destroyers, with whom we exchanged signals. They had been ordered to wait,

partly because of the gale, partly because enemy submarines, driven from the open sea by the weather, had been reported in the more sheltered waters of the Minches farther north.

The rest of our journey was practically uneventful, and by 9.30 in the evening we were passing Rathlin Island. Steaming down the Irish Sea was strange after the North Sea. All the shore lights and lightships were in full operation, and one by one they hove in sight over the horizon on both sides, winked at us in friendly fashion, and then, having served their purpose so far as we were concerned, faded away astern. It was quite like peace.

Soon after 11 p.m. we exchanged signals with a solitary destroyer, the *Racoon*, battling against the sea on her way back to Buncrana, Lough Swilly, while the next morning we were rounding Pembrokeshire on our way up the Bristol Channel to Avonmouth, where we arrived in the afternoon.

In the newspapers a few days later we read an Admiralty communiqué :

"Early in the morning of 9th January one of H.M. destroyers was wrecked off the north coast of Ireland. It is regretted there were no survivors. All the next of kin have been informed."

It was the *Racoon*, commanded by Lieutenant George L. M. Napier, the very ship we had passed and with whom we had exchanged signals. Little did we think when we saw her that within three hours every soul on board her would have perished.

In the pitch darkness and driving snow she struck the rocks within a few miles of the entrance to Lough Swilly. Nobody will ever know the exact circumstances of her loss. But the northerly gale was still raging, and one can imagine that little ship, reeling and lurching, groping her way towards the land in the midst of a blinding snow-squall, with the officers and men on her bridge endeavouring to see ahead. It was anxious work ; but those on board were probably optimists, with little doubt in their minds that within one hour or two they would be safely at anchor and asleep in their bunks or hammocks.

Imagine the black shadow of a wall of rock suddenly looming up out of the darkness close ahead, and the fringe of leaping, whitened water surging round its base. An agonised scream from the men on the look-out, the clang of the engine-

room telegraphs as they were rattled over to " Full astern " —for the last time. Too late.

A crashing, rending thud, which tore the bottom out of the ship as she drove ashore, lifted on a giant sea, and crashed again. Wave after wave breaking on board, to sweep men and deck fittings into the sea. Then a sickening lurch as she was lifted again and hurled broadside on to the rocks, to be battered to pieces, disintegrated.

We do not know the end of her officers and men, or of how, with their ship breaking up beneath their feet, they were torn one by one from their hand-holds to be drowned in the pitiless sea, or dashed to death among those cruel rocks. It is a mercy we do not.



# BREAKING THE RECORD

*By*

SIR MALCOLM CAMPBELL

OUR initial attempt on the record was planned for Sunday, 2nd January, 1927. There was an unpleasant drizzle during the whole of the night before, and at dawn the beach lay under heavy mist. Presently the mist cleared, revealing a desolate stretch of silent and empty sand.

At nine o'clock, as the tide receded, assistants marked the course with flags. Rain was falling then, and it continued until nearly eleven o'clock, when we made ready to bring the car out. The sands were very sloppy and wet, thin mist still hung about, and the prospect was altogether bleak and chill. We had waited so long, however, that I was anxious to make the attempt whatever the conditions.

The car was rolled on to boards placed at the starting-point, and these prevented the wheels sinking in the sand. We started the engine and everything was warmed up. I was told that all the timing arrangements were in order, and, at last, I revved up the engine and let in the clutch.

The car lurched a couple of feet forward, then the engine stalled. I made a second attempt, but the gear-box was faulty, and again the engine stopped.

We spent an hour making adjustments, then I tried once again. This time the car jerked forward, lunged off the boards and rolled on to the sand, halting with the engine dead. At once the machine began to sink in the soft, wet surface. I climbed out of the cockpit, while the mechanics called to the driver of a lorry which stood near. It was rolled on to the boards and, using a tow-rope, we tried to drag "Blue Bird" back. In the minute or so which had elapsed, the machine had already sunk until the sand was above its tyres, which meant that it was six inches deep in the sand. The

lorry was powerless to drag the car out ; each jerk on the tow-rope only forced the wheels deeper, while the efforts of the lorry kicked the boards in all directions.

We shouted to the spectators who had gathered, and they crowded around the car until fifty or sixty pairs of hands were thrusting on the machine. By this time "Blue Bird" had sunk until the frame was touching the sand, and our first attempt to move the car failed. The situation was desperate, as the tide was fast coming in ; we heaved again in unison and, reluctantly, the wheels rolled out of the troughs they had formed, mechanics thrust planks under them, and we were able to run the machine safely back to the boards.

Owing to the state of the tide, nothing more could be done. At the end of more than two years' work, we found ourselves pushing the machine back to its shed, conscious that it had not yet run under its own power. We spent the remainder of the day, and nearly all night, in making adjustments to the gear-box, bringing the car out again at noon next day.

"Blue Bird" roused willingly enough and, this time, mechanics and helpers gathered at the tail of the car, pushing it off the boards when I started. The machine went away with a roar, greatly to my relief. I had no intention of doing more than try the car out on that first run, but I reached 135 m.p.h. through the mile, making one or two unpleasant discoveries. The front wheels sent sand streaming at my wind-screen and, shooting past its edge, this stung my face, smothering my goggles. Wind, rushing through the radiator and past the engine, blew under the leather jacket which I was wearing, chilling me to the bone and actually lifting me upwards in my seat. When I reached the far end of the course and applied the brakes, I found them almost completely ineffective, and there were some moments when I feared that I should be unable to stop the machine.

Fortunately, "Blue Bird" slowed before running in to really bad sand, and I was able to turn round for a run in the reverse direction. I opened up once more and soon came to the conclusion that the engine was not giving off enough power. I returned at about the same speed, then decided to make a second practice run in order to confirm my first impressions. This time, however, the car stopped after covering fifty yards, the gear-box giving trouble once again. The machine immediately began to sink, but there were plenty of people to help roll the car to safety, and amongst those who ran over was Parry Thomas. He had come up to watch the attempt,

and he was the first to commiserate with us upon our hard luck when we decided to abandon the effort for the time being, and to take "Blue Bird" back to Povey Cross for the attention which was obviously needed.

That afternoon the car was put on its lorry, and the long journey of nearly three hundred miles begun. Before leaving, I made provisional arrangements to return in a fortnight's time, a date which coincided with the spring tides, which always left a broader and smoother beach than at ordinary times. I was anxious to make a second effort with as little delay as possible, because Thomas told me that he was working hard on "Babs" and would soon be coming up to Pendine himself.

I consulted the makers of the Napier-Lion engine concerning an increase of the power output. When the engine had first been tested, it had given off 525 h.p., and they had then suggested that it would be impossible for me to make use of all this power. I had been doubtful about this at the time, because I knew that even slight increases of speed demanded greatly enhanced power. It had been proved, roughly, that 300 h.p. was required for 140 m.p.h., and 500 h.p. was necessary to reach 170 m.p.h. I considered that 600 h.p. would be needed to reach 180 m.p.h., the speed at which we were aiming. These figures are not accurate, but they are sufficient to suggest how more power was needed, most of which would be absorbed in overcoming wind resistance.

High compression pistons were fitted, and special tuning brought the output of the Napier-Lion engine to 635 h.p. The gear-box was overhauled, and we investigated the brake trouble. We found that, although the drums had been milled from solid steel, they were too thin, and flexed when the brakes were applied at speed. We scrapped the drums and fitted others which were heavier.

The newspapers were filled with the story of that unfortunate first attempt, and it created more interest than any previous record effort. It was generally known that Thomas was getting ready and that Segrave's 1000 h.p. Sunbeam was nearing completion, and it was obvious that the record had become a straight fight between the three of us. Thomas and I believed it to be inevitable that Segrave would best whatever figure either of us might achieve, although a chance did exist that his car might not be so fast as was anticipated. Segrave's car was being designed to do 200 m.p.h., and many new factors might become apparent when he attempted this speed.

Quite apart from all this, we had begun work with the idea of reaching three miles a minute, and I was determined to achieve this if the car made it possible. I did not worry about what Parry Thomas or Segrave might do afterwards. Everything seemed well with the machine when we started for Pendine again on 16th January. A crowd was waiting in the village to see the car, and the local people were only too ready to render any possible assistance. They agreed to help in marking out the course for practice runs, because I intended to spend three or four days with the machine before making an official attack. I hoped, during these runs, to test the car thoroughly and to drive quite fast, and I was a little concerned about the effectiveness of the new brakes. Accordingly, I arranged for assistance to be available at both ends of the course so that, if I found myself unable to stop the car, I could run it into the sea; the water would act as a brake, and helpers would be handy to drag the machine back to the sand.

We arrived at Pendine late on Sunday afternoon, and we took the machine out on Tuesday morning. The weather was very poor; an exceedingly strong wind was blowing, while sheets of water lay over the course. However, we intended to run, whatever the conditions, and it was not long before "Blue Bird" got going. Clutch and gear-box proved satisfactory, but I handled the car carefully during the first dash down the course.

The machine flung a great stream of water and sand behind, and the wind kept catching the car. There was one point when it produced a nasty skid which brought "Blue Bird" almost sideways. The drag of the wet sand was something that could be felt, and on some patches the car slid badly, but no wind now came into the cockpit, because we had an extended shield on the side of the body to deflect the wind, while the brakes proved to be moderately efficient.

In view of the state of the beach, the car ran very well. I held it at a steady 140 m.p.h. over two runs, then decided to try the course again and, this time, to open up a little more, although there was no chance of bringing "Blue Bird" to its maximum speed. I went twice through the mile at 160 m.p.h. and, as everything seemed satisfactory, we made arrangements for an official effort two days later.

I had observed a very wet stretch of sand which, upon investigation, proved to be half a mile in length. The water came from a stream which ran through the dunes, and it seemed feasible to try and dam this little river. This was done

next day and, as a result, there was promise of a much drier course during the record attempts.

Wind continued high, and it was squally on the morning when "Blue Bird" was to come out again. There were alternate showers of hail and snow which, fortunately, passed off towards midday, when the course was marked and everything was made ready once again. The sun began to shine weakly, gleaming on thin stretches of sea-water which lay over the sand.

"Blue Bird" was rolled out, the engine was warmed up, and I sent the car off. Immediately after the start, the sand was anything but good. The drag was tremendous, and I felt that the car would never touch real speed. I kept my foot hard down, but I was not going fast enough to change into top gear until I was barely half a mile from the timing tape which marked the measured distance. The sand was firmer here, and I rammed the throttle well open as I approached the tape.

Until then, the car had been sliding and slithering on the treacherous surface, but now it steadied, accelerating splendidly, and was still gathering speed when I entered the mile. I drove through it, and at once made a return run, but I felt that the beach would not allow the car to reach record-breaking speed. When I stopped after that first double run, I doubted whether I had recorded even 150 m.p.h., and I was surprised to be officially informed that the speed was 166·38 m.p.h. for the double run and that, with the wind, I had done 171·3 m.p.h.

This was so near the record that it was very encouraging, and I tried again. On the second run, the car did not do so well, and when I heard the figures—barely 160 m.p.h.—I grew a little desperate. I decided to make one more effort. This time the car got away to a really grand start, and I entered the mile with the revolution counter showing well above 180 m.p.h. I knew that, even allowing for wheel spin, I must beat the record and that it required only a similarly fast return to secure it. The car held its pace through the mile, but slithered a little on the bad sand just clear of the distance. I stopped safely and turned, starting back again, determined to drive the machine flat out every yard of the way, knowing that it would have to be my last effort of the day, because the tide was now coming in.

"Blue Bird" gathered speed, and I steered to avoid wheel-marks made on previous runs. The machine was travelling at over 170 m.p.h. when, just before reaching the mile, the wheels ran on to the patch of soft sand across which I had

skidded a little earlier. At once the car shot sideways, sliding off the course, chopping down one of the flag-posts as it went. It skidded for half a mile, while I struggled to keep it under control, with the tail pitching first one way and then the other, sand shooting outwards in great streams from the wheels. By the time I brought "Blue Bird" back to the course, the car had slowed right down. The skid spoiled the run completely, and I drove on to the end of the beach, wondering what damage had been done.

We found that the broken post had made a great dent in the side of the bonnet, and one of the rear tyres had been badly gashed. With the tide coming in, there was no chance of trying again. "Blue Bird" returned to its shed, and we examined the figures set up during the day. When the times of the car's two fastest runs were checked, it was found that we had been within one-third of a second of breaking the record which Parry Thomas had set up.

It was bad luck to come so near success, and still to fail, although the speed would not have been the 180 m.p.h. at which we were aiming. It was still more unfortunate that, owing to the state of the tide, it would not be possible to make another attempt until a fortnight had passed. In view of this, "Blue Bird" was loaded on to its lorry and we returned to Povey Cross once more, where we worked on the machine for a week, then went back to the sands on Sunday, 30th January.

This was our third visit to Pendine and, if anything, the weather was now worse. We prepared the car during Monday, and that night a storm raged. In the morning, we found the beach strewn with little shells and debris. Local people and visitors walked over the beach as the tide went out, picking up shells and doing their best to clear the sand so that I could make a practice run. They made an extraordinary collection, including forty feet of wire hawser, two dead sheep, and endless pieces of timber.

While they were working, half a dozen cars raced out with marking flags. Men travelling on the cars placed the flags, while the drivers kept the machines moving, otherwise they would have sunk in the sand, although the surface was actually firmer than it had ever been during our previous visits.

They were still busy when we brought the car to the beach, and the moment that the last flag had been placed, I started. I was not trying for the record, but "Blue Bird" was timed at 175 m.p.h. through part of the mile. I knew that the machine was travelling very well, and I was so elated that

I drove flat out over the return trip. Five hundred yards short of the timing tape, I felt a lurch and the machine pitched into a furious skid ; one rear tyre had been cut by the razor-edged little shells which still lay on the beach.

I straightened and kept my foot hard down, risking a worse skid in my eagerness to learn what " Blue Bird " could really do. I held the car all through the measured mile, but the deflated tyre was a handicap, and the machine clocked only about 160 m.p.h. When I stopped, Villa and his companions began to change the wheel, because I intended to run again. Most unfortunately, it started to rain and it was not possible to go on.

Flying spray and sand were bad enough to contend with during a run, but rain would foul my windscreen, sand would cling to it, and I should be blinded. We were forced to give up for that day, and the rain continued all night, ceasing only at eleven o'clock the next morning, when we decided to make another practice run.

At such short notice, it was impossible to get much help in laying out the course. We had half a dozen cars, but only one man was available to drive each machine and place the flags ; at least two helpers had hitherto been on each car, one to mark the course and the other to keep the machine moving.

We solved the problem by sending the drivers out with instructions to put their cars in bottom gear and lock the steering over, so that the machines would run in circles while the drivers placed the flags. They started off and the arrangement produced the most astonishing sight that I had ever seen. When I looked along the beach a little later, the cars were going round and round with no one in them while, between the machines, the drivers were frantically busy, splashing through the water which still covered the sand, and hammering home the short flag-posts.

Later, I surveyed the beach, and it became apparent at once that all the work was wasted ; there was far too much water on the sand to make fast driving possible, and it was useless to bring " Blue Bird " out. Disappointed, I stood watching as the tide flowed out, and noticed that the only dry places on the beach were the huge circles drawn on the sand by the wheels of cars used in marking the course. In constantly turning around while their drivers set the flags, the tyres had formed ruts which now drained off all the adjacent water. This suggested an idea.

If a plough were employed to cut a furrow along the beach, it might drain water from the entire length of the course. It was worth making an experiment, and mechanics raced off to find a plough. They returned just as the tide began to come in and, hitching the plough behind a lorry, a test furrow was run for some distance. Very soon, water was seeping into the furrow, vanishing from the sand on either side and leaving it dry. It would be difficult to express our elation at this discovery, because dry sand meant a firm surface, and "Blue Bird" had done enough to prove that this would materially assist the car to beat the record.

We made our plans that evening, securing a second plough and the use of a tractor to draw it. Yet again it rained through the night, but the weather cleared in the morning, although the wind was then blowing off the sea, slowing the ebb-tide. The moment that sand began to show through the water, the two ploughs started off, the idea being to cut a furrow on either side of the course. The plough drawn by the tractor ran along the sand on the seaward side, and the other, hauled by a steel cable attached to a lorry, worked on the inside of the course.

Unluckily, this second plough threw the man who was working it after he had gone a little way, and the ploughshare itself was broken. The other carried on, however, running down the six-mile course. It progressed very slowly, and its work was not done by the time that the tide had run out and, backed by the wind, began immediately to turn.

We had the car warmed up and ready. I could wait very little longer if I were to drive the machine before the sea hid the beach again, and only now did we discover that our experiment was a failure. The almost completed furrow—near the sea—was filling with rain water running off the sand dunes, and now this spread inside the course, leaving more water than there would have been if we had not used the plough at all. But it became evident that this could be remedied if the second furrow were cut on the landward side, carrying out our first intention. A message was sent to the tractor, and the driver started back, cutting this second furrow.

I could wait no longer. The surface was firm, although very wet, the car had been tuned up to real speed, and everything was ready for a real attempt on the record. I wanted to miss no opportunity because the weather, bad as it had been, might become still worse. I was determined that we would return to Povey Cross with the record, or with the conviction that "Blue Bird" could not break it. This none of us would



believe, and I wanted to secure it if only for the satisfaction of all those who had worked for so long on the car.

We restarted the engine and I climbed into the cockpit. I could not see the plough, which was now cutting a second furrow, travelling in the same direction as "Blue Bird" would be moving during the first run. I settled down in the cockpit, with the engine roaring, flames and thin smoke streaking from the exhaust ports. The sound of the motor made speech impossible, and I waved the mechanics away, then sent the car off.

It pitched into a fierce skid an instant after leaving the boards, but I brought the machine straight and put my foot down—hard. Soon I picked up the banner which marked the measured mile and, from a glance at the revolution counter, I knew that "Blue Bird" would go through the distance faster than any machine had ever travelled before. I crossed the timing tape with the throttle wide open, while sand—thrown up by the front wheels and caught by the wind—smothered me. Water shot up in sheets, smashing over the windscreen, but the marking flags were a guide, and when I had cleared the measured distance I knew that, beyond any question of doubt, the existing figure had been beaten by a wide margin on that run.

I had still to return to secure the record, and I drove as far along the beach as I could before bringing the car about, then, with the machine headed back, I opened up once again. Some trick of the wind made conditions worse when I neared the mile, travelling at well above 175 m.p.h. Sand and flying water made it impossible for me to see, and I could hardly tell whether I was on the course or off it, and as I went over the tape, I remembered the tractor and the plough.

They were coming towards me. If I approached them only a few feet out of the straight, a collision was inevitable. I could not sight them through the spray and sand which lashed up over the front of the car, and I had to take my foot off the throttle. If I hit the plough, it meant absolute disaster for all concerned, and I could not take that risk. "Blue Bird" slowed, and I glimpsed the approaching plough. The car was headed towards it, and I had just enough time in which to ease outwards and miss the tractor.

This check spoiled all chance of reaching record speed. When I stopped, the fast-running tide was already washing the edge of the course. We could not run again, and "Blue Bird" returned to the shed.

The day's work, however, was more than useful. We had learned how best to employ the plough, and knew that a single furrow cut along the landward side of the beach would do all that was necessary. Next morning the weather changed and brought bright sunshine, although some wind remained. As soon as the tide began to go out, the plough started its six-mile journey, cars raced away with the flags, the timing apparatus was made ready, and "Blue Bird" was brought to the sand.

After so many exasperating failures and so much bad luck, we felt that we had to break the record this time, or give up altogether. Yet we had been aware of similar feelings prior to earlier attempts, and when these had failed, we had always kept on trying. But I did hope that this morning would see the acquisition of the record for which mechanics and assistants had worked so very hard and so cheerfully.

Groups of people went along the sands as the water drained away, picking up flotsam and shells. The sun grew stronger and helped to dry the beach, while the furrow which the plough was making did all that we had hoped. At two o'clock in the afternoon, everything was ready but, as a last blow, "Blue Bird" sulked. It took some time to get the engine going, and the delay nettled me, so that I missed a change on the difficult gear-box immediately after getting away, and was obliged to stop.

Mechanics came to my help, and I restarted from where the car had halted. "Blue Bird" made up for everything by gathering way very rapidly indeed, showing tremendous acceleration on the firm beach. I was running with the wind, and the car was absolutely steady; I was not much troubled by flying sand or water, and the machine gave me a very real impression of high speed, an impression as vivid as anything that I had known up to that time.

The wind had a pressure greater than that of any hurricane. It screamed past my head, and I found it impossible to hear the engine, the roar of which had been so deafening at the start. The sensation of everything rushing to meet the car was greatly heightened, and my most outstanding feeling was one of exhilaration. During part of the dash, "Blue Bird" was moving at 184 m.p.h., while the speed through the measured kilometre was 179.1 m.p.h.

The car reached more than three miles a minute, but to gain the record I had to return and, this time, "Blue Bird" was facing the wind. Everything went well during the second run until I was actually in the measured mile, then a bump sent

me upwards in the cockpit, so that my head was jerked into the airstream. My goggles were blown completely away, while water and sand slashed over the car, stinging my unprotected eyes, temporarily blinding me.

"Blue Bird" must have been moving at 175 m.p.h. in that moment. I had to lift one hand from the wheel, wiping my eyes to clear away the water and sand before I could see. Fortunately, the car remained straight, and I finished the measured distance without taking my foot off the throttle pedal.

I felt convinced that we had taken the record, and a minute or two after the car stopped, it was officially announced that the average speed through the measured mile, for the two runs, was 174.2 m.p.h. ; over the kilometre, the speed was 174.8 m.p.h. We had broken the record.

When they heard this, the mechanics paraded around the car, cheering and singing. We had not set up 180 m.p.h., but we had come very near it, and to make the day's success complete, I wanted to try again. The wind had freshened by the time our excitement had abated, and all was ready for another run, but "Blue Bird" seemed to have lost speed, and the double run which I now made was at a lower figure than the new record.

There was no time to make a third effort, and it seemed wise to leave the figures where they stood, and the day ended with our helpers accepting an invitation to a dance at the local hotel. The party which followed was similar to that which had succeeded our former success at Pendine ; then, triumphant after our two and a half years of work, "Blue Bird" was taken home.

# THE HOUSE ON THE MARSH

By

LIEUT. A. BAUERMEISTER

*How a German Secret Service officer penetrated the mystery of an old mansion in a swamp, thereby revealing a secret means of communication between spies in Russia during the War.*

ONE day Felix returned from a mission "over there" wearing a serious expression. "I don't like it," he said. "Somewhere in the neighbourhood of Pinsk there must be a Russian agent who has a line of communication with the Russians running through the Pripet swamps and the woods. I am sure that somewhere in those marshes the Russians have a secret telephone wire which we haven't spotted."

Felix then told me that while in Mogileff he had overheard a conversation which indicated that a Russian agent near Pinsk was sending reports, apparently by telephone, to a position behind the Russian front. In this connection mention had been made of the Pripet swamps and the adjacent forest, parts of which were almost inaccessible and therefore quite unknown to the German troops.

Accompanied by Felix, I went first to Pinsk, intending to explore the surrounding country. This was none too easy. If the Russian agent were ensconced anywhere in the Pripet marshes, whether in a tiny hut or a covert in the woods, I might seek him in vain for weeks on end.

"Only luck can help us here," said I.

Obviously I could not stay all that time at Pinsk just to follow up this matter, important though it was. So having obtained a general idea of the situation, I left it to Felix and Petrovski to search further, both having already proved their powers in this respect.

Furthermore, I called together all the military police in the

army zone and made a special appeal to them to leave nothing undone in their endeavours to trace the dangerous spy. Then I went back to the staff, where other important work awaited me.

Twelve days later Felix called me up. I was to come to Pinsk if possible. He believed he had found the right place. More he did not wish to say over the phone.

That evening, Felix, Petrovski, and I sat in a tea-house. The landlord was a German-Russian who was genuinely pleased to see us. Noticing that we did not wish to be disturbed, he went into another room. Felix now began his story.

"I should probably not have found it at all if I hadn't met a Pole here who has had no use for the Russians since they sent his mother to Siberia. It was he who told me about the old mansion of Zahorskoie. It lies just north of the swamp in a wild and desolate region. As it is right off the track of everything, no Germans are quartered there. The Pole believes the house to contain some mystery."

"Why?" I inquired.

"Well," he answered, "there is no direct proof, but I also think there's something odd about the place. Unfortunately, it's not possible to gain an entry into the grounds because of two big, ferocious dogs that prowl about day and night. Every night there is a light in the cellar, though the only person in the mansion is an old serving-man. I believe there's a secret behind it all. My curiosity being excited, I determined to pay a visit to Zahorskoie next day.

"Some five kilometres from the old mansion there is a tiny, miserable village, if one can call six peasant cottages with thatched roofs a village.

"I gave out to the peasants that I was a travelling merchant, and as I had two bottles of brandy with me we soon fell into talk. Here, too, as elsewhere in that God-forsaken region, no troops were quartered. When I told the peasants that I wouldn't take any payment for the brandy they were delighted.

"After a few glasses, these half-starved folk, who had not seen alcohol for ages, became quite garrulous. Very carefully I steered the conversation round to the old mansion.

" 'I recently passed the place in my cart,' I remarked, 'and saw at some distance in the grounds a man playing with a couple of dogs. He seemed to be an old fellow with grey hair. The dogs must be frightfully fierce, for they hurled themselves against the park gates and wouldn't stop barking.' "

" 'Yes, indeed, the dogs are very fierce,' the peasants told

me, 'and we wouldn't advise you to visit the park. The owners were proud people who cleared out with the Russians, leaving only an old servant behind.'

"Suddenly a peasant woman broke into the conversation, telling us that a few days ago she had offered some eggs at the mansion and had a talk with the old servant.

" 'I am not so stupid as you may think, sir,' she said 'Before I was married I had a place in St. Petersburg with a big official of the Ochrana (political police), and I saw and heard a great deal on every side. This morning I couldn't help thinking about the old mansion, and then I was struck with a really surprising idea. I believe the old servant is keeping a woman there as a prisoner.'

"I gave the peasant woman, who really did not look stupid, a glass of brandy, and begged her to continue.

" 'Why do I believe that?' she went on. 'Well, I'll tell you, and you can then say what *you* think about it. Two things surprised me. The old servant to whom I was trying to sell the eggs had snow-white hair, but in contrast to this his face was remarkably youthful. I gazed at him hard.

" 'What are you staring at me for?' he demanded harshly. I looked very downcast and answered that I hadn't been staring. 'Then I asked him if the gentry were away. "Of course they're away," he replied. "With the Russians. What would they be doing here among the Germans? I'm all alone except for the dogs."

" 'On my way home I couldn't help thinking all the time of this old man who had such a young face. I was so plagued with curiosity that yesterday afternoon I decided to visit the house again to have another look at him from a distance. I felt in my bones there was some mystery there. I could not get the old fellow with snow-white hair and young face out of my head.

" 'I passed along the wall of the park by a field path which is seldom used, especially in the autumn. A cart going that way would get bogged in the mud. The path is lined with dense woods and spinneys. I had not been waiting long when I saw, standing at a window in the first storey, a young and pretty woman. At the same moment she stepped back from the window. Judging by the description of her it must be the Countess herself.

" 'Of course, I was taken aback, remembering what the old servant had said. Why had he lied to me by saying he was all alone? Who is the woman? Is it the Countess, and, if so,

why is she in hiding ? Is the old servant keeping her a prisoner ? Well, that's how it is, sir. What do you think about it ?'

"I was careful to appear rather innocent, and expressed my view that probably the old man was a criminal who was holding the young Countess by force. My actual opinion, however, was quite different.

"I privately gave the peasant woman five roubles and asked her in a whisper to speak to me alone. Then I said to her aloud : ' It's too late for me to get back to Pinsk ; my horse would be liable to break his legs on these awful roads. Whether I like it or not, I'll have to spend the night here.'

"Noticing that the five roubles had not been without effect, I inquired of the peasant woman whether she could put me up for the night if I paid for my lodging.

" ' Certainly you may stay,' she replied. ' There is also a little stable for your horse. I'll make room for you at the stove and I myself will sleep on the bench.'

"So, after distributing a handful of cigarettes among the villagers, I accompanied the peasant woman. Happening to look around, I saw meaning smiles on the faces of several of the peasants.

"No doubt they thought I was seeking an amorous adventure ! In due course I got the woman to tell me her story again in full detail."

Felix had now finished his very interesting report, and he looked at me expectantly.

"What do you think of the business ? " he asked.

"Well, that's not so easy to say at the moment. I'll turn it all over in my mind to-day. In any case, I must pay a visit to the place myself. We can discuss it again in the morning."

At this we left the tea-shop and went out into the miserable autumn night and the drenching rain. Not a soul was to be seen in the darkened streets.

"Many thanks, Felix," I said at parting. "I believe you have brought off a really fine piece of work."

I had put up at an hotel—or, at any rate, a sign to that effect hung above the door. But according to German ideas it was simply a miserable little room which no one in Germany would have thought of describing as a hotel apartment. A grubby-looking waiter, who also filled the rôles of hall porter and domestic, brought me tea.

I was now anxious to get my plans quite straight. The peasant woman cannot have been by any means stupid ; she obviously had a good instinct for detective work. Without

doubt the old servant at the mansion had dyed his hair. But why? And why had he told the lie about his being alone. What was the young woman or the young girl doing at the mansion?

I pondered the matter further. Was it not possible that the old servitor was the Count himself, and the woman at the window the Countess, both of whom the Russians had left to act as spies behind the German front? Was this the Intelligence centre or perhaps the terminal point of the telephone cable which Felix had heard about in Mogileff?

Many ideas and plans raced through my brain, but I discarded them all. It was three o'clock in the morning before I had worked out my scheme. This I laid before Felix when he came to breakfast at nine.

Wearing tattered civilian clothes, I proposed to present myself at the deserted mansion in the guise of a Russian officer prisoner of war who had escaped, and to beg for shelter. If the man did not see through me I should have gained a point. It would then be my task to win the confidence of the "servant," who was probably the Count himself. After that, everything must be decided on the spot according to circumstances. I never doubted for a moment that by taking this course I was thrusting myself into the lion's den. On the other hand, I reflected, I had often posed as a Russian officer, and, so far, had never incurred the slightest suspicion. I was fully versed in Russian military affairs and had in St. Petersburg many acquaintances among the officers there.

Felix, it is true, wrung his hands and implored me to give up this plan, which he considered far too dangerous; but my resolve was unshaken. Felix and Petrovski were to accompany me, and the peasant woman also. Not, of course, into the mansion itself; entry there was reserved for me alone.

My three companions were to wait on the woodland path, from which they would have a good view of the old mansion. I would try at all costs to keep to the front rooms—that is, those that faced towards the path. If danger threatened me I would flash three short signals from the window with my electric torch.

If I did not report myself within twenty-four hours, Felix, Petrovski, and the peasant woman were to force their way into the house.

We started on the following morning. When I looked at myself in the mirror I had to laugh. The suit was too big for



me and it was decidedly shabby. I doubted whether even a close acquaintance would recognise me in this rig-out.

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"Who's there?" demanded a voice in the Polish tongue as I pulled at the rusty bell chain. "What do you want at this late hour?"

"Come to the gate!" I answered in Russian. "I have something important to tell you."

Slowly and distrustfully the old servant came nearer, holding a lamp in his hand, and followed by the two dogs. He held the lamp aloft and shone it in my face. At this moment I looked closely at him and at once noticed how youthful his countenance was in contrast to the white hair.

"Are you friendly to the Germans?" I asked.

"Why do you ask?"

"Because I am an escaped Russian officer who wants to get through to the Russian front," was my answer.

As I was speaking, the man had masked his lamp, and he appeared to be considering.

"What proof have I that you're not a spy, a decoy?" came his voice again, out of the darkness.

"My name," I answered shortly, calmly giving the name of an old and well-known family of the Russian nobility. "Let me come in at least for the night. It's raining so hard and is so cold. Or are you a friend of the Germans? If so, I'll continue on my way before you betray me."

I could hear from his voice that my words had not been without effect.

"I will give you shelter for one night, but to-morrow you must leave," said the supposed servant. "It's too dangerous for me. So far we have been spared having troops billeted on us, but we must always reckon with that possibility, even though we lie right away on the marshes. If you as a Russian officer were captured here I should certainly be shot."

When I was forming my plans in Pinsk I had guessed that the "old man" was merely acting the part of a servant. Now I was convinced of it. He was now speaking Russian to me with such an educated accent that I said to myself: "Old man, old man, you're playing your part very badly, making many mistakes!"

I entered the lion's den.

"Please go first," said the servant.

Our footsteps echoed uncannily in the great hall, dimly

lighted by a small lamp on the wall. One of the two dogs was at our heels, the other having remained in the park.

Quite innocently I inquired of the servant whether, as a matter of courtesy, I might announce my arrival to the gentry of the house and thank them for their hospitality.

"That would be difficult," said the old man, "seeing that Count Oginski is with the Countess in St. Petersburg and I am all alone here with the two dogs."

I had put off my sodden cloak and seated myself in a deep arm-chair. The lamp now stood on the table, bathing me in light, while the great hall lay in semi-darkness. A few paces away crouched the dog, his eyes fixed steadily upon me.

I was positive that in the next few hours my life would be at stake. One of us twain would have to go under. While I was thinking this I heard a faint bell tinkling. Not a doubt of it : that was a telephone which appeared to be in the cellar directly below me. The dog growled, while the old man cast a furtive glance at me to see whether I had noticed anything. But I merely asked innocently why the dog had suddenly growled, and again the old man was deceived.

"Probably some one passing behind the park wall," he replied. "In this part of the world you find ragamuffins everywhere. It's unpleasant to be so lonely here at night."

As I sat in the arm-chair with the lamp shining full upon me and talked to the old man, I suddenly and distinctly saw, close by, a heavy curtain move. I drew my hand across my eyes. No, it was not a dream : a woman's eyes were gazing at me fixedly. So the peasant woman's sight had been good !

And another thought flashed through my head—probably behind that curtain was the entrance to the cellar. At least two minutes had passed since the telephone bell had rung, during which time the mysterious woman had probably answered the call.

Thus in the first ten minutes of my visit I had discovered much. Already I knew three important facts. First, the man who posed as servant had dyed hair and was probably the Count himself ; secondly, there was a woman in the house, probably the Countess ; thirdly, the secret telephone was in the vaults, exactly beneath where I was sitting.

For the moment, it is true, I was in a trap, for I did not rightly know which of the rooms faced towards the road. I had to find that out as quickly as possible, for the Count and the woman were certain to have determined to sell their lives as dearly as possible. If I could discover the room in question

I should be saved, for both Felix and Petrovski were well armed and could force their way into the mansion in a few minutes.

These thoughts were passing through my brain when I heard once more the faint tinkle of the telephone bell in the cellar. Again glancing at me apprehensively, the servant enquired whether I would like to be shown to my room. I had only been waiting for that.

The ancient mansion was much larger than it appeared to be from the road. It had a deep frontage on the park. We passed through a long, low-ceilinged corridor which had doors only on the left side. Here and there on the other side, about six feet above the ground, were small barred windows. Through these, the moon having suddenly appeared in the sky, I saw clearly the silhouette of trees. So the road lay to the right of the corridor ! The servant now opened one of the doors and lighted a huge, old-fashioned lamp.

"This is not really a bedroom," he explained, "but it's nice and warm. I will make you up a bed on the sofa."

When he had left the room I stepped to the window before which hung a heavy and ancient curtain. Drawing this back I saw that the window opened not on to the park, but into a lighting shaft. The room was a handsome one, with heavy old furniture and two massive bookcases set against the wall.

While the servant was making up the bed on the sofa I studied him intently. The hair was dyed, but badly so. It had partly grown since the process and at the roots it was black. After laying me an appetising supper, including a bottle of wine, he took a respectful leave, mentioning that he was now about to turn the second dog loose.

"So many tramps wander about the wood," he told me. "To-day there have been more than usual. The dog in the park has been continually growling and running to the gate."

I had not the least doubt that I should now be kept under observation from some hidden place. It was not an accident that I had been given this room. This large and ancient mansion, which must contain at least thirty rooms, certainly possessed a guest chamber.

Was the food poisoned ? No, that was hardly likely. But as for the wine I preferred to leave it alone, since there was a probability that it was drugged. After glancing through several of the books I simulated a yawn and began to undress. I had, as a matter of fact, discovered the secret watcher. Between the two bookcases hung an old portrait of a knight, and as I

was accidentally passing this I saw two human and sparkling eyes disappear from behind the pierced eye-holes of the picture.

I put out the lamp and stretched myself on the sofa. Behind the wall on which hung the portrait I heard soft foot-falls. Then everything was silent as the grave, but for the monotonous patter of raindrops. By this time I was convinced that the Count and Countess distrusted me, and that the victor in this contest would be he who got his blow in first.

In letting the second hound loose in the park the Count had made a blunder for which he was to pay heavily. I knew that Felix had brought three police dogs with him, and these would certainly do their duty.

Finding myself suddenly overtaken by fatigue, I sat up in bed to prevent myself from falling asleep. It would soon be time to act. In the adjoining room a clock droned out twelve strokes, then all was silent again. I rose noiselessly and went to the door. The key was on the inside. I turned it gently and then opened the door without a sound. Then I slipped back the safety catch of my revolver. In the corridor, too, everything was still. Only the wind in the trees was to be heard.

Across the road, barely fifty paces from where I stood, Felix and Petrovski awaited my signal. I could have flashed it now through one of the tiny barred windows. There was the 95 per cent. certainty that the secret telephone lay below in the vaults. And it was not usual in a country mansion to instal the telephone in a cellar.

I could, as I have said, have given the signal quite easily now. But I cogitated the matter. No, it was still too early. I must first see whether I could not learn something more. So with my fingers touching the wall I crept forward foot by foot. The last door in front of the hall was not quite closed, and through the gap a narrow beam of light streamed into the corridor. Noiseless as a cat, I edged my way nearer and was just in time to hear the Count say :

"I don't know, but this stranger doesn't please me. It's true he speaks Russian fluently and knows all about affairs in St. Petersburg yet I could almost swear that three weeks ago I saw him at the 'Bristol' in Warsaw, dressed as a German officer."

"But that would mean death to us, Vitya," the Countess answered. "I will go at once to see whether he is asleep. If he drank that wine he ought to be sleeping soundly enough," and

with these words she moved towards the door. I sprang round the corner into the hall, then listened with both ears. But all I heard were the footsteps of the Countess in the distance.

\* \* \* \* \*

When making my spring I had knocked against a small table, but in the excitement of the moment I did not notice what nearly proved to be my doom. The Count had heard the noise. . . .

Very quietly I crept through the hall, my hands outstretched. It was pitch dark. Then I touched the curtain behind which the Countess had lately stood while she watched me. I drew this back and stepped behind it. Then, very cautiously, I switched on my pocket torch. I stood in a very narrow alcove, little more than a niche, which in former times had probably contained a statue. On the floor lay a small but heavy Persian rug. I lifted it up and found what I had expected: a wooden trap-door.

But in my excitement I had failed to hear the Count creeping after me, and I did not know that he was now standing behind the curtain. I drew back the bolt and raised the door of the trap. A steep spiral staircase led down to the vaults. With my torch alight and feeling every inch of my way, I began to descend the stairs. Then, with a fearful crash, the trap-door was slammed down above me and the bolt shot home.

I heard only the loud and mocking laughter of the Count. . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

I was in a trap, but still determined to sell my life as dearly as might be. Flashing my torch on the door above, I saw it had a bolt on the inside as well. This I shot home too, before the Count had time to remember it.

Then I continued down the steep stairs. I found myself in a large vault, which in olden days may have served as a refuge or a granary. One corner was very neatly fitted up. It was furnished with a table telephone and two heavy club chairs. Various papers lay on the table. There was no window, but in the left-hand wall I noticed a door fastened with an old-fashioned lock.

I quickly took my bearings. This door must lead to a room which faced the roadway. If I could contrive to open the door with a pick-lock, and if the adjoining room had a window looking out on the road, then I was saved.

At this moment a loud voice sounded in the vault, echoing strangely through the place. I started involuntarily. Surely there was no one in the vault except myself. Then I listened

again. The voice came through a speaking-tube that was fitted in the corner. I went up to it and heard the jeering tones of the Count.

"Well, my German colleague, so you walked into the trap! And so clumsily! Did you really think us so stupid? Naturally, we were prudent enough to provide ourselves with a second telephone. As you will never leave this cellar alive I will even satisfy your curiosity. The second telephone is fitted in the little chapel in the park. In four weeks' time I'll come down to the vault and bury your corpse in the forest."

At these words my blood ran cold. If Felix and Petrovski forced their way in at the end of twenty-four hours, would they find me in the cellar? If the Count had replaced the thick rug over the trap-door I should not be able to hear what was going on above, and in that case I would really be lost. . . .

Taking the skeleton key from my pocket, I began working on the lock. The Count, of course, could not know that I carried such an implement on me. So simple was the ancient lock that I had it open in a few minutes. The door, of massive oak, groaned on its rusty hinges. At this moment, I knew, my life hung by a thread. If the room had no window facing the road, my opening of the door would be wasted effort, and a miserable death by starvation would be my certain fate. On the threshold I all but tripped over some object that lay behind it. I flashed my torch downwards and started back in horror. It was the corpse of an elderly man, already in an advanced state of decomposition, the features horribly twisted.

But at the moment I had other anxieties. Did this room have a window fronting the road? I lighted up the wall and almost cried aloud for joy. Some five feet above me was a small window covered by a close-meshed grill. I was saved!

With my torch I gave the agreed signal in Morse, repeating it several times. Would they see it? Outside shone the moon, and through that narrow barred window I could discern the wide gate and behind it the forest. Then I saw Felix and Petrovski emerge from the trees and run across the road. So they *had* seen my signals.

I now hastened back to the vault, climbed the staircase, and waited just under the trap-door. Despite the thick rug I heard shots in the hall—then all was silent. Then the stillness was shattered by one appalling scream. Knowing that my friends would not easily detect the trap-door, I returned to the window and flashed more signals. Then suddenly the shutter was opened and I saw Felix before me. I explained to him where

the trap-door lay, and barely five minutes later I heard the bolt drawn back. I stepped out into the niche in the hall and was at once embraced by Felix and Petrovski, who wept for joy at seeing me.

Lying bound on the thick carpet lay the Count and Countess, side by side, guarded by the police dogs. The Countess's dress was badly torn. In attempting to escape she had been roughly mauled by one of the police dogs. Felix and Petrovski had brought all the lamps they could find into the hall, which was now ablaze with light.

Petrovski, with a couple of well-aimed bullets, had disposed of the great hounds outside when they had tried to keep him from the gate.

It was now my turn to laugh at the Count. He lay on his back, his face convulsed. As Felix and Petrovski had not brought sufficient rope, only the legs of the two prisoners were bound. The Count had thrown away his revolver, and although their hands were free they seemed helpless with their feet tied.

"The tables have been turned!" I said to the Count. "You were going to let me die a horrible death from starvation in the vault, but now things are different. You had better understand that. But you were quite right in thinking you had seen me at the 'Bristol' in Warsaw. You were sitting at the next table, but at that time your hair was dark, Count Oginski."

He gnashed his teeth in impotent fury.

Together with Felix I then returned to the vault, where we saw the papers on the table. So secure against detection had the Count felt himself that he had left a large number of military reports simply lying there. Part of them were in the handwriting of his wife. Both, therefore, were flagrantly guilty of espionage and more than ripe for court-martial. I caused the telephones in the vault and in the little park chapel to be destroyed.

Although repeatedly questioned by Petrovski as to who the dead man in the cellar was, the Count refused to say a word. Who could this be who had met so dreadful an end?

We were soon to regret the shortage of rope for the prisoners' bonds. The Count must have contrived to take some poison out of his pocket and pass some of it unseen to his wife, for suddenly both were seized with spasms and foamed at the mouth. Petrovski shouted for me.

Thinking that the prisoners had perhaps broken from their bonds, Felix and I dashed into the hall. But we arrived too



*I flashed my torch downwards and started back in horror.*





late. Both the captives were *in extremis*. A few last spasms, and then the end came.

Meanwhile day was dawning outside, a cold wet autumn day. It was still raining. Near the chapel in the grounds Felix and Petrovski buried the Count and Countess, and beside them the unknown dead man I had found in the vault.

We stayed at the mansion two days to investigate the copious material we had discovered there. It put us on the tracks of three other spies behind our front, one in Warsaw and two in Pinsk.

Pending the arrival of a guard from the nearest military post to prevent any plundering of the deserted and valuable mansion, I installed Felix as administrator. But before leaving I once more visited every room in the place, which was decorated and furnished on the most sumptuous scale. And all this in a wilderness of marshland ! Generations had come and gone, and centuries had passed over this venerable mansion, forgotten by the world.

Now it lay ownerless. Count Oginski was the last of his house, and he too had gone to join his ancestors. A chill wind sighed through the park, driving before it the fallen leaves. Above the marshes a grey mist hovered. At the park gates a wandering monk tugged at the rusty bell, but none opened to him.

Already the grey mist was creeping over the ancient park, lying dense and heavy above the chapel and the newly turned graves. And out of this grey pall rose the spectral outlines of the old grey mansion, standing there in the illimitable marshland.

# TWO LOVELY BLACK EYES

By

JOHN TRANUM

*The author, a famous parachutist and "stunt" flier, recounts the following exciting story of an aeroplane crash.*

IT was while I was at Long Beach that I struck up a partnership with a man whom we will call Allen. This man had in his earlier days been a balloonist, and it was in this capacity he had picked up his air-knowledge; he had now made a good business-name for himself as a stunt-men's agent for film-work. Unfortunately, like many good business-men, he had one or two unpleasant little faults, which finally led to his being suppressed by the American Government.

His chief fault lay in selling tenth-rate equipment to over-eager youths. Parachutes in those days were difficult to get, and inexperienced stunters jumped at the chance of obtaining them on the comparatively easy terms which Allen offered.

As a result, the death-rate for parachutists rose alarmingly, and I myself would most certainly have been numbered amongst his victims had I not been more cautious and experienced.

My first big mishap with this man I must confess, was mainly due to my own temerity—or braggadocio, perhaps you will think. He had, amongst other curiosities, a huge parachute of some forty-five feet in diameter—a breadth nearly twice the normal. This instrument went by the uncompromising name of "Allen's Hoodoo," owing to its inexplicable perverseness and inconsistency. For some parts of its flight it would behave rationally; then it would suddenly kick up its heels, as it were, and show all its latent nastiness. Several people had tried to "break in" this chute, and had invariably met with disaster.

One day I went up to Allen and said, "I'll have a shot at old Hoodoo."

"Is that so?" he replied.

"Sure," I said. "I'll jump it any time."

He shrugged his shoulders. "Good enough. You can give it the air on your next stunt."

"Sure!" I said, having no doubt on the matter.

My next stunt happened to be one for a film made at Dycer's Airport, where I was supposed to be the hero making his escape from a machine—I am not sure for what reason. I could easily have used one of his ordinary twenty-four-foot parachutes for this occasion, as the job was quite a simple one, but I had arranged to jump with "Hoodoo" at the earliest opportunity, and this happened to be it.

I started off quietly enough; the chute opened in the approved manner, and all seemed to be well. Then I started to swing. Every parachute swings you a little, but this one swung me a lot. The trouble was, of course, that my weight was nothing like sufficient to rein in the abnormal bulk of the chute, nor was my strength enough to counteract the swing by pulling at the cords, as is usually done in such an emergency.

My swinging became more and more pronounced, and more and more dangerous, until it reached such a pitch that on some occasions I found myself looking down through the hole in the chute which should have been thirty feet above my head! Even so, I should not have felt much discomfort had I been swung back in the same manner as I had been swung up, but the truth was that the centrifugal force often deserted me at the zenith, and I fell almost perpendicularly, to be brought up with a terrific jolt at the end of the thirty-foot cords.

But this was by no means my big concern. The nasty part of the business was still in store for me, and that was when I hit earth. The swinging was whirling me around at the end of the cords like a stone in a monstrous sling, and I was quite likely to be dashed on the ground with such terrific force that nothing could be left of my body but pulp.

It was pure luck that saved me—or most of me. I missed the ground by a few feet on an upward swing, and my contact with earth was made with no other mediator than mere gravity. The final drop was twenty to thirty feet, and I hit the ground in practically a sitting position, breaking the tail-bone of my spine and receiving two record black eyes!

How the black eyes came about I cannot tell; it is a question for a physician to answer, but it seemed just as if my forehead had been sandbagged.

When they dug me out of the soil, they found that there

were still signs of life in my body, so they stuck me in an automobile and drove me round the field amongst the people—just to show them I wasn't hurt! Throughout this triumphant parade, I was quite conscious and sensible of all that was going on, but, when we reached a comfortable spot behind the hangar, I slid into a deep sleep, and did not regain my wits for a week.

It was while I was in bed and mending a little that I read the account of the death of a boy to whom Allen had sold one of his bogus parachutes. The parachute concerned in the case I knew well, for some time back I had examined it and declared it an enemy to mankind. The silk itself had looked promising enough, but the harness I could see almost at a glance was rotten.

This boy had been an Easterner just recently versed in the arts of flying, and had taken it into his head that no airman was worthy of the name without having made a parachute descent. So he bought the kit from Allen, and jumped without even inspecting it.

The silk opened and caught the air immediately—in fact, too suddenly, and put more than the average strain on the harness. But that harness couldn't have stood the pull of a handkerchief; the strappings snapped and broke away; the next instant the youth's body was hurtling through the air at 120 miles an hour. He fell between two gigantic tanks near-by the airport, and it took an hour to locate his body, or what remained of it.

But Allen didn't care. It was only a little while after this disaster that he hired out another crazy parachute. This time the harness was in fairly good condition—Allen seldom made his chutes weak twice in the same place—but the cording was fearful stuff: common twisted fish-line. The boy would have been better off had his cords been bits of bootlace.

When he jumped, the silk opened up just enough to jerk him in an upright position and no more. Then the twist got to work. If you tie a piece of twisted line to a bucket, put a weight in the bucket, and hold the whole out at arm's length, you will see that the bucket slowly commences to revolve. That is what happened to this boy. As soon as his weight pulled on the cords, they twisted up into themselves and befouled each other; so much so that the whole mass of cording was reduced to a cable, and the parachute, which should have been spread like a canopy above him, was drawn into a mere bundle. Thus the chute offered no more resistance to the air than the

poor fellow himself, and together they fell, like a comet and its tail, to their destruction.

It was about this time that I began to sit up and take notice. The deaths, coming so close together, and both so obviously due to shameful faults in Allen's handiwork, gave me food for thought. Yet I did not at once throw up partnership with him, for, after all, he was quite a good agent, and I didn't help him to make his rotten parachutes. One day, however, something happened which finally decided me to steer clear of him. This matter was not one of life and death, but a much more acute thing—money.

As my agent, he had secured for me a job with a film company. The stunt was a fairly common kind, and not worth mentioning. When it was over, and the time came for collecting money, I went to Allen—who had already been paid for the stunt by the company—and demanded my pay.

"You'll have to wait for it," was his reply.

"I want it now," I said, and so I did.

"Well, you can't have it. I'll pay you all in good time."

"Oh, just when you feel like it, eh?"

"That's it."

"Well," I said, "that's no good to me."

So I quitted.

As he owed me for my stunt, I pinched one of his parachutes as part payment.

But Allen and everything about him was rotten to the bitter end; the parachute was a dud.

The circus was now due to take another trip round the counties, but this time in the Eastern States. For this trip I was equipped with a swift Nieuport battle-plane, which was a refreshing change from the older type planes I had been used to. Later on, this same Nieuport nearly killed me.

When we reached San Antonio, Texas, a fellow introduced me to the Irvin parachute, which differed from the instruments I was used to in one big point: where the old type of chute had been pulled open by the static line, the Irvin parachute was released by the rip-cord.

Upon examining this parachute, I found that this rip-cord pulled out with it two long and thin steel pins, which kept the doors or flaps of the pack closed. Thus, when the rip-cord was pulled, the pins were jerked out, the flaps flew open—aided by elastic cords stretched around the pack—and out shot a tiny pilot parachute which instantly opened and pulled the main parachute out after it.

The amazing part about it is that the pilot parachute, the big one, and all the cording are jerked out in the wink of an eyelid.

I confess that up to this time I had been suspicious of the rip-cord innovation, but, as soon as I tried one of these Irvin parachutes, I was sensible of their enormous superiority over the type I had been using.

It was just after I had secured one of these new parachutes that we had the only two mishaps of the voyage—but these accidents were altogether apart from stunting. The first was when we flew into a sandstorm, with only a couple of hours' petrol in our tanks. A sandstorm is not a pretty thing to face, even when you are on the ground, and, when you are travelling at the speed of an express train into it, anything may happen. Not only that—in an aeroplane, good visibility is essential when flying near the ground.

We had been following a railway track, for in this district a forced landing might mean days or weeks of waiting before anything came near us, and the locomotive was our only link with civilisation. As we were bound to land somewhere and somehow, we headed as near to the track as we dared and came down.

The plane jolted a bit as it met earth, but that did not worry us. After a very brief taxiing, we came to a sudden but satisfactory standstill, and all that was left now was mutual congratulation on our safe landing.

Just then I wiped the sand off my face, and made a most extraordinary discovery. The plane had nearly lost both its wings!

I felt peeved.

A plane, on landing, is not expected to collapse. No doubt very soon we shall have collapsible machines, but ours wasn't then—at least, not in theory. For our plane to renounce its most vital parts just when we had brought it safely to earth was, we thought, a sorry show of ingratitude.

Feeling more sorrow than anger, I peered over the sides of the fuselage and tried to mark, amidst the swirl of the sand, some sign of the wings in the confusion behind us. And then I saw what had happened.

When we had landed, our wheels had struck a narrow strip of bare earth between two clumps of cactus. Thus, when we taxied forward, the fuselage was given freedom of progress, while the fierce vegetation had seized our wings in its spiky claws and torn them to smithereens!

We left the machine to rot and sat on the railway-track for four hours, during which the storm abated, and we were able to stop the next train. The officials, seeing the plight of our only means of locomotion, were kind enough to give us a lift, and the aeroplane, for all I know, still moulders in the desert.

The other mishap was a more personal affair, and the cause of this was once again the ill-natured and misanthropic cactus, which, although some claim it to be good at heart, has a most uncompromising exterior. This time I was landing quite normally with a parachute, but had been blown a little off the beaten track and into roughage.

I have never jumped into a bunch of upturned bayonets, but I should imagine I am qualified to describe such an experience. My chute swung me into the biggest clump of cactus in all North America—I am sure it was selected specially for the purpose—and my body was incontinently transformed into a writhing human pincushion. The pins, I will add, were about the size of knitting-needles.

They had some trouble in getting these things out of my flesh, and it wasn't exactly a holiday for me either.



# FACE TO FACE WITH DEATH

By

F. A. M. HEDGES

*This extract is taken from Mr. Mitchell Hedges' book " Battles with Giant Fish," describing his adventures over a two-year programme of deep-sea fishing and exploration work. He was accompanied by a well-known sportswoman, Lady Richmond Brown. The adventure he describes here occurred while they were exploring the San Blas Archipelago, Panama.*

WHETHER we anchored our yacht, whilst exploring this minute archipelago, the fishing was splendid. One morning we had ten jack, in weight ranging from 26 to 41 lb., and the same evening got four large red snappers, the smallest 30 lb., with one splendid specimen scaling over 50 lb. I should have caught quite a number but for that confounded nuisance the shark again making its appearance. I had struck and played my third fish, and nearly got it to the side of the boat, when with a rush and a bang, away went the line, one of these vicious beasts dashed up, and not only took my fish (which I should think weighed about the same as the other two) in at a gulp, but bit through my wire lead as if it had been a piece of thread. I ran out a heavy shark line, and baiting with one of the two fish I had caught, after a good stiff fight landed the brute. It must have weighed nearly 600 lb., and I guess I could have gone on catching them, but as I now had the yacht I had determined that the Pacific should be the centre of operations.

In mentioning that the fish caught here were very like the tuna, it may be of interest to fishermen to know that it is an established fact that these splendid fish, the great feeding-ground for which was for many years supposed to be off Catalina, California, are now known to occur in considerable

numbers off the New Jersey coast of the United States. A year or two back my old friend Bob Meissner, of the Ocean City Fishing Club, caught two weighing over 400 lb. each; and Van Campen Heilner, in his book *The Call of the Surf*, describes vividly adventures with monsters of the species on the banks about twelve miles off shore. It is estimated that in this locality they run up to over 1000 lb. in weight.

Still more recently I received a report that a fish if not the tuna, something very closely allied, had been captured off the Canary Islands. It would be most interesting if this could be established, but one must remember that it is only comparatively recently that big-game fishing has been recognised as one of the greatest and most exciting sports in the world. It is really an art which no "fine-weather" fisherman should attempt to pursue, but for real sportsmen who are prepared to endure a certain amount of hardship and take the good with the bad, it will give thrills second to nothing I know of. I have done a considerable amount of big-game hunting in various parts of the world, but my experience is that with modern arms brought to the perfection that they have been to-day, the pursuit of big beasts on land is child's play in comparison with hunting the big beasts of the sea.

I am now compelled to pass over our discovery of that unknown tribe, the Chucunaque Indians, and all that befell us in their country, as it would be poaching on some one else's preserves and would also occupy space which must be devoted to battles with the leviathans of the Pacific.

During our voyage through the San Blas Islands and the Kaymaals, we gathered an immense amount of data, and added largely to our collection, some of our finest coral specimens and shells being discovered here, and many strange fish. I shall always remember standing on the top of a tiny coral mound which had not yet risen above the surface, about six inches of water still flowing over it, and looking down into the miniature caves and crevices, where the surprising beauty of the innumerable fish swimming in and out was such as to be beyond the power of pen to describe adequately. Their brilliant, varied colouring was exquisite—peacock-blue, sky-blue, amber, scarlet, and some with purple stripes, while every now and again shoals of parrot-fish kaleidoscopically appeared like a moving picture.

Time indeed flies in the study of the amazing life in tropical seas. After many adventures and tribulations we started the return voyage. We had to traverse an awful piece

of water known to the Indians as Islagandee Channel, and after two more terrific chuquesanas, El Porvenir was once again safely reached, and we went out through the opening in the reef into the main ocean on our run to Colon.

The calmness of the water inside the barrier was cruelly deceptive, for no sooner were we out in the channel than our terrible danger became apparent. A tremendous sea was running, huge rollers sweeping right in and breaking completely across the entrance. Almost before we were aware of our peril we were plunged into the seething turmoil. To turn round, which I would gladly have done, was impossible, and the only thing to do was trust to Providence and proceed. By almost a miracle we reached the open sea, and once clear of the reef I breathed a sigh of relief, for had one of the great curling waves hit us, nothing could have saved us from destruction—we should have been dashed on the coral reef, to be smashed to pieces instantaneously. In a sea in which a ten-thousand-ton liner would have rolled considerably we carried on, and as the day advanced the weather conditions grew steadily worse. Finally, calling Lady Brown, Robbie, and John George together, a sort of conference was held to decide what was best to do. I pointed out that it would be impossible for us to continue the journey to Nombre de Dios and survive, for we were shipping water all the time and every minute I expected the engine to fail. There was no anchorage and the outlook seemed hopeless. We were in a terrible plight. As a last ray of hope, John George told us that right close in behind a reef a few miles farther on was a deep pool, calm as a lake, but our chances of being able to run in between the very narrow opening were extremely slight. In a few words I summed up the position: if we went on we must founder and nothing could save us; if we ran the reef there was a faint chance that all might yet be well. I decided on the latter alternative, trusting to the Goddess of Fortune to see us through. About four or five miles farther on John George informed me we were approaching the place. We were about three miles out, and looking shoreward, all I could see at that distance was young mountains of white water which shot into the air forty or fifty feet where the rollers burst on the reef.

However, there was nothing to be done but risk it, so turning sharply in, with the sea astern, we drove headlong to the shore. Nearer and nearer we approached; still I could see no opening.

"For the love of the Lord, Boss, can you see a big black rock sticking up?" suddenly asked John George, who was piloting the boat.

Not a thing could I see. I strained my eyes through the flying spume, but there was nothing visible but a roaring vortex of water.

Suddenly Robbie exclaimed: "Right ahead, John!" and there, appearing every now and then, I could see a black object. At this moment we seemed to be lifted up out of the sea by a huge roller and rushed forward at terrific speed. It looked as if we were being hurled to certain death. Afterwards Lady Brown told me she had almost unconsciously noticed that beneath my tan I was absolutely grey, and I frankly confess I was gripped with fear. On either side of us rose a white wall of water, the deep boom of which seemed to shake the yacht. Straight ahead we rushed, driven by the force of the great roller through a churned mass of foam, and then—before one could count three—the miracle had happened: we were through into the calm lagoon beyond!

After a strain of this sort comes a violent reaction. This was experienced by all of us, and it is on such occasions that the beneficial effects of alcoholic stimulant are abundantly proved. We had a case of champagne on board, and a tumblerful apiece I verily believe did more good than any medicine. It was the first time John George and Robbie had ever taken it, but there was no need for them to acquire the taste for it, and a few minutes after drinking it that wine certainly pulled us all together. "Some" drink—and I was never more grateful for one in my life; and I am sure the rest felt as I did.

# MAN-EATER

By

FRANK BUCK AND EDWARD ANTHONY

*The Author has spent a great many years collecting live wild animals for zoos, circuses, and dealers. In the following story he tells of the capture of a huge tiger at Johore, India, for an American Zoo.*

IN 1926 I was again in Singapore putting the finishing touches to a splendid collection. My compound was fairly bursting with fine specimens. I had brought back from Siam a fine assortment of argus pheasants, fireback pheasants, and many small cage birds. Out of Borneo I had come with a goodly gang of man-like orang-utans and other apes. From Sumatra I had emerged with some fat pythons and a nice group of porcupines, binturongs, and civet cats. Celebes had yielded an imposing array of parrots, cockatoos, lorries (brush-tongued parrots of a gorgeous colourings)—one of the biggest shipments of these birds I had ever made. My trip to Burmah was represented by a couple of black leopards (more familiarly known as panthers), several gibbons, and a sizeable army of small rhesus monkeys. In addition, I had a number of other specimens picked up along the line.

I was to sail for San Francisco in a couple of weeks. This meant that I would have to make a thorough inspection of my crates and cages to make sure they were all in shape to stand the rigours of a thirty-five or forty-day trip across the Pacific.

With Hin Mong, the Chinese carpenter who had served me for years, I made the rounds of the various boxes, he making notes of new cages and crates that were needed.

His cleverness knows no bounds. Working with a home-made saw, a crude chisel made out of a scrap of iron shaped and sharpened on a grind-stone, and a few other primitive tools, he does carpentry that is as finished as if it came out

of an up-to-date shop equipped with the finest of tools. Some of it, in fact, is finer than any carpenter work I have ever seen done anywhere. With a couple of chow-boys (apprentices) to assist him, Hin Mong would pitch into any task to which I assigned him and when it was done it was a piece of work to be proud of.

The owner of the house in Katong where I usually lived when in Singapore had sold it, making it necessary for me to move out, although I still maintained my compound there. After the sale of the house I invariably stayed at the Raffles Hotel when in Singapore. I had just returned to my room there after an early morning session with Hin Mong, in the course of which we made a final inspection of the crates and cages, when I was informed that the Sultan of Johore was on the telephone and wished to speak to me at once. Whenever the Sultan telephoned, the information that he was on the wire was passed on to me with much ceremony, sometimes my good friend Aratoon, one of the owners of the hotel, announcing the news in person.

As the morning was still young I was puzzled, for it was most unusual for H.H. to telephone so early. It was a very serious H.H. that spoke to me. He got to his business without any loss of time. Did I still want a man-eating tiger? Well, here was my chance. Breathlessly he told me that a coolie on a rubber plantation twenty-five miles north of Johore Bahru had been seized by a tiger while at work and killed. The animal, a man-eater, had devoured part of the body. Work, of course, was at a standstill on the plantation. The natives were in a state of terror. He (the Sultan) was sending an officer and eight soldiers to war on the killer. It was necessary to show some action at once to ease the minds of his frightened subjects. If I thought I could catch the man-eater alive he would be glad to place the officer and soldiers under my command, with instructions to do my bidding. If, after looking over the situation, it became apparent that in trying to capture the killer alive, we were taking a chance of losing him, he expected me to have the beast immediately shot. He wanted no effort spared in locating the animal. There would be no peace in the minds and hearts of his subjects in the district where the outrage was committed until the cause was removed. In a series of crisp sentences the Sultan got the story off his chest. This was an interesting transition from his lighter manner, the vein in which I most frequently saw him.

Needless to say I leaped at the opportunity to try for a man-eater. H.H. asked me to join him at the fort over in Johore Bahru, which I agreed to do without delay.

At the fort, which is the military headquarters for the State of Johore, the Sultan introduced me to the officer he had selected to assist me, a major with a good record as a soldier and a hunter. He was a quiet little chap, so well-mannered that his courtesy almost seemed exaggerated. (The Malays, by the way, are the best-mannered people in Asia.) His soldiers were a likely looking contingent. It was obvious that H.H. had picked good men to help me with the job.

The major was not in uniform. He was dressed in ordinary rough clothes of European cut. I was interested in the rifle he carried. It was a Savage .303, which most hunters consider too small a gun for tiger-shooting. This capable Malay, however, had killed several tigers with this weapon, the Sultan told me. It took a good man to do that.

The major's command were dressed in the khaki shirts and "shorts" affected by Malay soldiers. They wore heavy stockings that resembled golf hose. If not for the little black Mohammedan caps on their heads and their weapons—(each was armed with a big sword-like knife and a Malayan military rifle)—they might have been taken for a group of boy scouts. A cartridge-belt around each man's waist topped off the war-like note.

The major bowed two or three times and announced in his fairly good English that he was ready to start. We departed, the officer and his men piling into a small motor lorry, Ali and I following in my car. The asphalt roads of Johore are excellent—many of them the work of American road-builders who did a wonderful job of converting stretches of wilderness into fine highways—and we were able to motor to within three miles of the killing. The rest of the journey we made on foot over a jungle trail.

I had requested the Sultan to order the body of the slain coolie left where it was when the killer had finished his work. When we arrived we found a group of excited natives standing around the mangled remains. One leg had been eaten off to the thigh. The animal had also consumed the better part of one shoulder, and to give the job an added touch of thoroughness had gouged deeply into the back of the neck.

Other groups of natives were standing around not far from the body, some of them hysterically jabbering away,

some making weird moaning noises, others staring down at the ground in silence. One has to have a good comprehension of the wild world-old superstitions of these natives to appreciate fully what happens inside them when a man-eating tiger appears. All the fanaticism that goes with their belief in strange devils and ogres finds release when a tiger, their enemy of enemies, kills a member of their ranks. They act like a people who consider themselves doomed. Going into a delirium of fear that leaves them weak and spiritless, they become as helpless as little children. Under a strong leadership that suggests a grand unconcern about man-eating tigers, they can be rallied to work against the striped foe; but, until there are definite signs of a possible victory, this work is purely mechanical. The most casual glance reveals that each member of the terrified crew is staring hard at the jungle as he perfunctorily goes through the motions of doing whatever it is you assign him to.

An investigation revealed that the victim of the tiger had been working on a rubber tree when attacked. His tapping knife and latex cup (in which he caught the latex, or sap) were just where they had dropped from his hands when the poor devil was surprised, mute evidence of the suddenness of the assault. Then he had been dragged fifteen or twenty yards into some nearby brush.

Bordering along the jungle wall—as dense and black a stretch of jungle, incidentally, as I have ever seen—was a small pineapple plantation. This was not a commercial grove, but a modest affair cultivated by the estate coolies for their own use. An examination of the ground here revealed marks in the dirt that unmistakably were tiger tracks. The tiger's spoor led to a fence made by the natives to keep out wild pigs, whose fondness for pineapples had spelled the ruin of more than one plantation. Through a hole in this fence—which could have easily been made by the tiger or might have been there when he arrived, the work of some other animal—the killer's movements could, without the exercise of much ingenuity, be traced in the soft earth across the pineapple grove into the coal-black jungle some fifty yards away.

It is no news that a tiger, after gorging himself on his kill, will return to devour the unfinished remains of his feast. If there is no heavy brush within convenient reach he will camouflage those remains with leaves and anything else that is handy for his purpose and go off to his lair. Confident that he has covered his left-over skilfully enough to fool even



the smartest of the vultures, jackals, hyenas, and wild dogs, he curls up and enjoys one of those wonderful long sleeps that always follow a good bellyful and which I have always believed to be as much a part of the joy of making a good kill as the actual devouring of it.

I felt, as I studied the situation, that when the tiger returned for the rest of his kill—assuming that this creature would follow regulation lines and revisit the scene of the slaughter—he would again make use of that hole in the fence. It was a perfectly simple conclusion. Either the animal would not return at all or if he returned he would retravel his former route.

“*Changkuls ! Changkuls !*” I yelled as soon as I decided on a course of action. A *changkul* is a native implement that is widely used on the rubber plantations. It is a combination of shovel and hoe. With the assistance of the major I managed to make it clear to the natives what it was I wanted them to do.

My plan was to dig a hole barely within the borders of the pineapple plantation, so close to the hole in the fence through which the tiger had travelled on his first visit that if he returned and used the same route he would go tumbling down a pit from which there was no return—except in a cage.

I specified a hole four feet by four feet at the surface. This was to be dug fourteen or fifteen feet deep, the opening widening abruptly at about the half-way mark until at the very bottom it was to be a subterranean room ten feet across.

Soon we had a sizable gang of natives working away with the *changkuls*. The helpful major, to whom I had given instructions for the pit that was now being dug, bowed a sporting acquiescence to my plan when I knew full well that this accomplished *shikari* who had brought down many tigers with the rifle was aching to go forth into the jungle in quest of the man-eater.

The pit finished, we covered the top with nipa palms. Then we made away with the pile of dirt we had excavated, scattering it at a distance so that the tiger, if he returned, would see no signs of fresh soil. The body was left where it was.

Ali then returned with me to Johore Bahru where I planned to stay overnight at the rest-house adjoining the United Service Club. Before leaving, I placed the soldiers on guard

at the coolie lines with instructions to keep the natives within those lines.

The coolie lines on a rubber plantation correspond to the headquarters of a big ranch in this country. There is a row of shacks in which the natives live, a store where they buy their provisions, etc. My idea was to give the tiger every possible chance to return. Too much activity near the stretch of ground where the body lay might have made him over-cautious.

Early the next morning the soldiers were to examine the pit. If luck was with us and the tiger was a prisoner, a Chinese boy on the estate who owned a bicycle that he had learned to ride at a merry clip was to head for the nearest military post—(there is a whole series of them, very few jungle crossroads in Johore being without one)—and notify the authorities who in turn would immediately communicate with the fort at Johore Bahru.

The next morning no word had been received at the fort. At noon I drove back to the rubber plantation to see if there was anything I could do. The situation was unchanged. There was no sign of the tiger. No one had seen him, not even the most imaginative native with a capacity for seeing much that wasn't visible to the normal eye.

The body of the mangled native was decomposing. Though I did not like to alter my original plan, I acquiesced when the natives appealed to me to let them give their fallen comrade a Mohammedan burial (the Malay version thereof). They put the body in a box and carried it off for interment.

The major did not conceal his desire to go off into the jungle with his men to seek the killer there. He was characteristically courteous, bowing politely as he spoke, and assuring me that he had nothing but respect for my plan. Yes, the *tuan's* idea was a good one—doubtless it might prove successful under different circumstances—but it was not meeting with any luck, and would I consider him too bold if he suggested beating about the nearby jungle with his men in an effort to trace the eater of the coolie?

What could I say? My plan had not accomplished anything and we were no closer to catching our man-eater than when we first got to work. I readily assented, stipulating only that the pit remain as it was, covered with nipa palms and ready for a victim—though if the animal returned after the number of hours that had elapsed, it would be performing freakishly

There was no point in my staying there. So, when the major went off into the jungle with his men, I left the scene, returning to Singapore with Ali. I still had considerable work to do before the big collection of animals and birds in my compound would be ready for shipment to America.

I felt upset all the way back to Singapore. Here was the first chance I had ever had to take a man-eating tiger and I had failed. Perhaps I was not at fault—after all, the business of capturing animals is not an exact science—but just the same I was returning without my man-eater and I was bitterly disappointed. Ali did his best to cheer me up, but all he succeeded in doing was to remind me over and over again that I had failed. Using words sparingly and gestures freely, he tried to communicate the idea that after all a man could worry through life without a man-eating tiger. In an effort to change the expression on my face he grinned like an ape and made movements with his hands designed, I am sure, to convey the idea of gaiety. He wasn't helping a bit. Feeling that I was too strongly resisting his efforts to buck me up, he grew peeved and resorted to his old trick of wrinkling up his nose. This drew from me the first laugh I had had in several days. Seeing me laugh, Ali broke into a laugh too, wrinkling up his nose a few times more by way of giving me a thoroughly good time.

When we returned to Singapore I kept in touch with the situation by telephone, the fort reporting that though the major and his men had combed every inch of the jungle for some distance around, they found no trace of the killer. The major gave it as his opinion that the beast had undoubtedly left the district and that further search would accomplish nothing.

"Well, that's that," I said to myself as I prepared to busy myself in the compound with the many tasks that were waiting for me there.

The third day, very early in the morning, just as I was beginning to dismiss from my mind the events that had taken place on that rubber plantation, I received a telegram from the Sultan of Johore which, with dramatic suddenness, announced that the tiger had dropped into the pit! No one knew exactly when. "Some time last night." Would I hurry to the plantation with all possible haste? He had tried to reach me by phone and failing this had sent a fast telegram.

Would I? What a question! Perhaps it is unnecessary

for me to say how delighted I was over the prospect of returning to the plantation to get my man-eating tiger. Ali ran me a close second, the old boy's joy (much of it traceable to my own, no doubt, for Ali was usually happy when I was) being wonderful to behold.

We climbed into the car and set out for the plantation at a terrific clip. At least half the way we travelled at the rate of seventy miles an hour, very good work for the battered bus I was driving.

When we arrived, the natives were packed deep around the sides of the pit. Never have I witnessed such a change in morale. There was no suggestion of rejoicing—for the natives endow tigers with supernatural powers and they do not consider themselves safe in the presence of one unless he's dead or inside a cage—but they were again quick in their movements. A determined looking crew, they could now be depended upon for real assistance.

In addition to the crowd of coolies, the group near the pit included the major and his soldiers and a white man and his wife from a nearby plantation. The woman, camera in hand, was trying to take a picture. Even in the wilds of Johore one is not safe from invasion by those terrible amateurs to whom nothing means anything but the occasion for taking another picture. I distinctly recall that one of my first impulses on arriving on the scene was to heave the lady to the tiger and then toss in her chatterbox of a husband for good measure. This no doubt established a barbarous strain in me.

I ploughed my way through the crowd to the mouth of the pit. The natives had rolled heavy logs over the opening, driven heavy stakes and lashed the cover down with rattan.

"*Apa ini?*" I inquired. "*Apa ini?*" [What is this?]

"Oh, *tuan!* *harimu besar!*" came the chorused reply, the gist of it being that our catch was a "great, big, enormous tiger." I loosened a couple of the logs, making an opening through which I could peer down into the pit. Stretching out on my stomach, I took a look at the prisoner below, withdrawing without the loss of much time when the animal, an enormous creature, made a terrific lunge upward, missing my face with his paw by not more than a foot.

This was all I needed to convince me that the natives had shown intelligence in covering the mouth of the pit with those heavy logs. I did not believe that the beast could

have escaped if the covering was not there ; yet he was of such a tremendous size that it was barely possible he could pull himself out by sinking his claws into the side of the pit after taking one of those well-nigh incredible leaps.

The business of getting that tiger out of the pit presented a real problem. This was due to his size. I had not calculated on a monster like this, a great cat that could leap upward to within a foot of the mouth of the pit.

Ordinarily it is not much of a job to get a tiger out of a pit. After baiting it with a couple of fresh killed chickens, a cage with a perpendicular slide door is lowered. An assistant holds a rope which when released drops the door and makes the tiger a captive as soon as he decides to enter the cage for the tempting morsels within, which he will do when he becomes sufficiently hungry. A variation on this procedure, though not as frequently used, is to lower a box without a bottom over the tiger. This is arduous labour, requiring plenty of patience, but it is a method that can be employed successfully when the circumstances are right. When you have the box over the tiger and it is safely weighted down, you drop into the pit, slip a sliding bottom under the box and yell to the boys overhead to haul away at the ropes.

It was obvious that neither of these methods would do in this case. I simply could not get around the fact that I had underestimated the size of the man-eater and had not ordered a deep enough pit. Our catch was so big that if we lowered a box he could scramble to the top of it in one well-aimed leap and jump out of the hole in another. Ordinary methods would not do. They were too dangerous.

I finally hit upon a plan, and, as a good part of the morning was still ahead of us, I decided to tear back to Singapore for the supplies I needed and race back post-haste and get that striped nuisance out of the pit that day. I could not afford to spend much more time on the plantation. I had so much work waiting for me in connection with that big shipment I was taking to the United States.

My first move on arriving in Singapore was to get hold of Hin Mong and put him and his chow-boys to work at once on a special long, narrow box with a slide door at one end. When I left for my next stop, Mong and his boys had cast aside all other tasks and were excitedly yanking out lumber for my emergency order. Knowing this Chinese carpenter's fondness for needless little fancy touches, I assailed his ears before departing with a few emphatic words to the effect

that this was to be a plain job and that he was not to waste any time on the frills so dear to his heart.

Leaving Mong's I headed for the bazaars, where I bought three or four hundred feet of strong native rope made of jungle fibres. Next I went to the Harbour Works and borrowed a heavy block-and-tackle. Then I hired a motor truck.

When I added to this collection an ordinary Western lasso, which I learned to use as a boy in Texas, I was ready to return to the rubber plantation for my tiger. While on the subject of that lasso, it might be appropriate to point out that the public gave Buffalo Jones one long horse laugh when he announced his intention of going to Africa and roping big game, and that not long afterwards the laugh was on the public, for Buffalo serenely proceeded to do exactly what he said he would. I have never gone in for that sort of thing, but my rope, which is always kept handy, has been useful many times, even a crane, a valuable specimen, having been lassoed on the wing as it sailed out over the ship's side after a careless boy had left its shipping box open.

When the box was made—and though Hin Mong and his chow-boys threw it together hastily, it was a good strong piece of work—I loaded it and the coil of rope and the block-and-tackle on to the truck and sent this freight on its way to the rubber plantation, putting it in charge of Ali's nephew, who was then acting as his uncle's assistant at the compound. I gave him a driver and two other boys and sent them on their journey after Ali had given his nephew instructions on how to reach the rubber plantation. Four boys were needed to carry the supplies the three miles from the end of the road through the jungle trail to the plantation.

My own car, which had carried Ali and me on so many other important trips, carried us again. Our only baggage was my lasso, which I had dropped on the floor of this speedy but badly mutilated conveyance of mine that for want of a better name I called an automobile.

As I had not seen the Sultan since the day he turned his major and those eight soldiers over to me, I decided to drop in on him on the way to the rubber plantation.

Having learned he was at the fort, I headed for these glorified barracks, where H.H. greeted me effusively. He came out of the fort as we pulled up, leaning over the side of the car. Two or three times he congratulated me on my success in getting the tiger into the pit. Then, very solemnly—(and for half a second I didn't realise that he had reverted

to his bantering manner)—he said, "Glad you stop here before you go take tiger from pit. I would never forgive you if you did not say good-bye before tiger eat you."

Laughing, I told H.H., whose eyes were resting on the lasso at the bottom of the car, "You don't seem very confident, do you?"

"Confident?" came the reply. "Sure! You going to catch tiger with rope like cowboy, no? Very simple, this method, no? Very simple. Why you don't try catch elephant this way too? Very simple." Then the Sultan broke into one of those hearty roars of his, slapping his thighs as he doubled up with laughter.

"Don't you think I can do it, H.H.?" I asked.

Tactfully, he declined to answer with a yes or a no. All he said was, "This is tiger, not American cow." This was more eloquent than a dozen noes.

"I'll tell you what, H.H.," I said. "I'll make a little bet with you, just for the fun of it. I'll bet you a bottle of champagne that I'll have that tiger alive in Johore Bahru before the sun goes down." H.H. never could be induced to make a wager for money with a friend, that's why I stipulated wine.

"I bet you," he grinned. "But how I can collect if tiger eat you?" (Turning to Ali with mock sternness) "Ali, you do not forget that your *uan* owe me bottle champagne if he do not come back!" Then he exploded into another one of those body-shaking laughs of his.

We were off in a few minutes. Clouds were gathering overhead and it looked like rain. I wanted to get my job over with before the storm broke. Stepping on the gas, I waved a good-bye to H.H., and we were on our way.

I was worried by the overcast skies, but I did not regard the impending storm as a serious obstacle. It looked like a "Sumatra," a heavy rain and wind-storm of short duration, followed by bright sunshine that always seems freakish to those who do not know the East. The chief difficulty imposed by the storm, in the event that it broke, would be the slippery footing that would result. A secondary problem would be the stiffening of the ropes. Rope, when it has been well exposed to rain, hardens somewhat, although it can be handled. If it rained, my job would be so much tougher.

We tore along at maximum speed, my engine heralding our approach all along the line with a mighty roar. Considering the terrific racket, I had a right to expect the speedo-

meter to indicate a new speed record instead of a mere seventy an hour. My bus always got noisy when I opened her up, reminding me of a terrier trying to bark like a St. Bernard.

The skies grew darker as we raced along and when we were a short distance from the point where it was necessary to complete the journey on foot, a light rain started to fall. By the time we were half-way to the plantation it was raining hard and Ali and I were nicely drenched when we arrived.

The rain had driven many of the coolies to cover, but at least a score of them were still standing around when we pulled up. The major and his soldiers, soaked to the skin, stood by faithfully, the major even taking advantage of this inopportune moment to congratulate me again—he had done it before—on my trapping of the man-eater. I appreciated this sporting attitude after the failure of his search in the jungle. However, I didn't feel very triumphant. The tough part of the job was ahead of me. Getting a tiger out of a pit into a cage in a driving rainstorm is dangerous, strenuous work.

I got busy at once. Taking out my knife, I began cutting my coil of native rope into extra nooses. This done, I knocked aside some of the stakes that secured the pit's cover, rolled away some of the logs, and, stretching out flat with my head and shoulders extending out over the hole, began to make passes at the roaring enemy below with my lasso rope. One advantage of the rain was that it weakened the tiger's footing, making it impossible for him to repeat the tremendous leap upward he had made earlier in the day when I took my first look down the pit. As I heard him sloshing around in the mud and water at the bottom of his prison, I felt reassured. If the rain put me at a disadvantage, it did the same thing to the enemy.

With the major standing by, rifle ready for action, I continued to fish for the tiger with my rope, the black skies giving me bad light by which to work. Once I got the lay of the land I managed to drop the rope over the animal's head, but before I could pull up the slack—the rain had made the rope "slow")—he flicked it off with a quick movement of the paw. A second time I got it over his head, but this time his problem was even easier for the fore-part of the stiffening slack landed close enough to his mouth to enable him to bite the rope in two with one snap. Making a new loop in the lasso I tried over and over but he either eluded my throw or fought free of the noose with lightning-fast movements in



which teeth and claws worked together in perfect co-ordination as he snarled his contempt for my efforts. The rain continued to come down in torrents. When it rains in Johore, it rains—an ordinary Occidental rain-storm being a mere sprinkle compared to an honest-to-goodness “Sumatra.”

By now I was so thoroughly drenched I no longer minded the rain on my body; it was only when the water dripped down into my eyes that I found myself growing irritated.

After working in this fashion for an hour till my shoulders ached from the awkward position I was in, I succeeded in looping a noose over the animal's head and through his mouth, using a fairly dry fresh rope that responded when I gave it a quick jerk. This accomplished my purpose, which was to draw the corners of his mouth inward so that his lips were stretched taut over his teeth, making it impossible for him to bite through the rope without biting through his lips. I yelled to the coolies who were standing by ready for action to tug away at the rope, which they did, pulling the crouching animal's head and forequarters clear of the bottom of the pit. This was the first good look at the foe I had had. The eyes hit me the hardest. Small for the enormous head, they glared an implacable hatred.

Quickly bringing another rope into play, I ran a second hitch around the struggling demon's neck, another group of coolies (also working under Ali's direction) pulling away at this rope from the side of the pit opposite the first ropehold. It was no trouble, with two groups of boys holding the animal's head and shoulders up, to loop a third noose under the fore-legs and a fourth under the body. Working with feverish haste, I soon had eight different holds on the man-eater of Johore. With coolies tugging away at each line, we pulled the monster up nearly even with the top of the pit and held him there. His mouth, distorted with rage plus what the first rope was doing to it, was a hideous sight. With hind legs he was thrashing away furiously, also doing his frantic best to get his roped fore-legs into action.

I was about to order the lowering of the box when one of the coolies let out a piercing scream. He was No. 1 boy on the first rope. Looking around I saw that he had lost his footing in the slippery mud, and, in his frenzied efforts to save himself, was sliding head first for the mouth of the pit. I was in a position where I could grab him, but I went at it so hard that I lost my own footing and the two of us would have rolled over into the pit if Ali, who was following



*I was in a position to grab him . . . but I lost my footing.*



me around with an armful of extra nooses, hadn't quickly grabbed me and slipped one of these ropes between my fingers. With a quick tug, he and one of the soldiers pulled us out of danger.

The real menace, if the coolie and I had rolled over into the pit was that the other coolies would probably have lost their heads and let go the ropes. With them holding on there was no serious danger, for the tiger was firmly lashed.

I've wondered more than once what would have occurred if the native and I had gone splashing to the bottom of that hole. Every time I think of it, it gives me the creeps; for though the coolies at the ropes were dependable enough when their *tuan* was around to give them orders, they might easily have gone to pieces, as I've frequently seen happen, had they suddenly decided that they were leaderless. It wouldn't have been much fun at the bottom of the pit with this brute of a tiger.

The coolies shrieked but they held. The rain continued to come down in sheets and the ooze around the pit grew worse and worse. Self-conscious now about the slipperiness, the boys were finding it harder than ever to keep their feet.

The box would have to be lowered at once. With the tiger's head still almost even with the surface of the pit, we let the box down lengthwise, slide door end up. Unable to get too close, we had to manipulate the box with long poles. The hind legs had sufficient play to enable the animal to strike out with them, and time after time, after we painstakingly manœuvred the cage into position with the open slide door directly under him, our enraged captive would kick it away. In the process the ropes gave a few inches, indicating that the strain was beginning to be too much for the boys. If we were forced to let the animal drop back after getting him to this point, it was a question if we'd ever be able to get him out alive.

Quickly I went over the situation with Ali. I was growing desperate. With the aid of the major and three of his soldiers we got the box firmly in place, the tired boys at the ropes responding to a command to tug away that lifted the animal a few inches above the point where his thrashing hind legs interfered with keeping it erect. I assigned the three soldiers to keeping the box steady with poles which they braced against it. If we shifted the box again in the ooze we might lose our grip on it, so I cautioned them to hold it as it was.

"Major, I'm now leaving matters in your hands," I said.

"See that the boys hold on and keep your rifle ready." Before he had a chance to reply I let myself down into the pit, dodging the flying back feet. Covered with mud from head to foot as a result of my dropping into the slime, I grabbed the tiger by his tail, swung him directly over the opening of the box and fairly roared: "Let go!" Let go they did, with me leaning on the box to help steady it.

The man-eater of Johore dropped with a bang to the bottom of Hin Mong's plainest box. I slid the door to with a slam, leaned against it and bellowed for hammer and nails. I could feel the imprisoned beast pounding against the sides of his cell as he strove to free himself from the tangle of ropes around him. His drop, of necessity, had folded up his hind legs and I didn't see how he could right himself sufficiently in that narrow box for a lunge against the door at the top; but the brute weighed at least three hundred pounds, and if his weight shifted over against me he might, in my tired condition, knock me over and——

"Get the hammer and nails!" I screamed. "Damn it, hurry up!" I leaned against the box with all my strength, pressing it against one side of the pit to hold the sliding door firmly closed.

No hammer! No nails!

Plastered with mud, my strength rapidly ebbing, I was in a fury over the delay.

"*Kasi pacoo!* [Bring nails!]" I shrieked in Malay, in case my English was not understood. "Nails! *Pacoo!* Nails!" I cried. "And a hammer, you helpless swine!" There weren't any swine present but that's what I called every one at the moment. I felt the tiger's weight shifting against me and I was mad with desperation.

The major yelled down that no one could find the nails. *The can had been kicked over and the nails were buried in the mud. They had the hammer. . . . Here she goes! I caught it. . . . What the hell good is a hammer without nails?*

"Give me nails, damn it, or I'll murder the pack of you!"

It was Ali who finally located the nails, buried in the mud, after what seemed like a week and was probably a couple of minutes. Over the side of the pit he scrambled to join me in a splash of mud. With a crazy feverishness I wielded the hammer while Ali held the nails in place, and at last Johore's coolie-killer was nailed down fast. Muffled snarls and growls of rage came through the crevices, left for breathing space.

Then I recall complaining to Ali that the storm must be getting worse. It was getting blacker. The *tuan* was wrong. The storm was letting up. Perhaps I mistook the mud that splashed over me as I fell to the floor of the pit, too weak to stand up, for extra heavy raindrops.

Ali lifted me to my feet and my brain cleared. I suddenly realised that the job was all done, that the man-eater of Johore was in that nailed-down box. I was overjoyed. Only a man in my field can fully realise the thrill I experienced over the capture of this man-eating tiger—the first, to my knowledge, ever brought to the United States.

Ropes were fastened around the box—(no one feared entering the pit now)—and with the aid of the block-and-tackle, our freight was hauled out of the hole.

Eight coolies were needed to get our capture back through the slime that was once a dry jungle trail to the highway leading to Johore Bahru. More than once they almost dropped their load, which they bore on carrying poles, as they skidded around in the three miles of sticky muck between the rubber plantation and the asphalt road which now reflected the sunlight, wistfully reappearing in regulation fashion after the rain and wind of the "Sumatra." There we loaded the box on to the waiting lorry, which followed Ali and me in my car.

About forty minutes later as the sun bathed the channel in the reddish glow of its vanishing rays, I planted the man-eater under the nose of the Sultan in front of the United Service Club in Johore Bahru.

With more mud on me than any one that ever stood at the U.S.C.'s bar, I collected my bet, the hardest-earned champagne I ever tasted.

The Sultan was so respectful after I won this wager that once or twice I almost wished I hadn't caught his damned man-eater. H.H. is much more fun when he's not respectful. *I enjoyed his pop-eyed felicitations but not nearly so much as some of the playful digs he's taken at me.*

The man-eater of Johore, by the way, eventually wound up in the Longfellow Zoological Park, in Minneapolis, Minn.

# SCOUTING IN THE BOER WAR

By

CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, O.B.E.

WHEN asked to relate a few of my personal adventures I naturally commence with a few scouting yarns, and will describe some happenings during my affiliation with a famous regiment of scouts during the Boer War. Brother Boer was a wily fighter and a true believer in the adage, "He who fights and runs away," etc. etc. Consequently, good scouting was of vital interest to the British forces opposing the Boers during the war of 1899 to 1902. Many corps of scouts were raised, such as Driscoll's Scouts, Harber's Scouts, Nesbitt's Horse, the Tasmanian Bushmen, Remington Guides, Lord Lovat's Scouts, and many others, but no corps of scouts in South Africa surpassed the famous Montmorency's Scouts, nicknamed "The Death or Glory Boys." They were commanded by Captain de Montmorency, an officer of the 17th Lancers—a dashing, capable officer who was killed by a Boer sniper early in the war. The fame of his scouts, however, will live long in the annals of the British Army.

Imagine my satisfaction, therefore, when early in 1900 I, at the time a member of the Royal First Devon Yeomanry Cavalry, was one early morning ordered to report to Montmorency's Scouts for duty with them. My tunic buttons nearly burst with pride, I was so swelled up about it.

At this time my own regiment was brigaded with General Leslie Rundles' "Starving Eight" Division, so called because we never got anything to eat. The satisfaction I derived emanated primarily from my "innards," as I saw visions of fried goat's meat, boiled chickens, oranges, and other dainties, which I made up my mind I would loot from the Boer farm-houses during my scouting duties.

My pride arose partly from the fact that I could now wear

the famed head-dress as worn by "Montmorencys," which was a felt hat turned up at the left side, which left a flat surface on which was emblazoned in black and white a skull and cross-bones, whilst the hat was surmounted with a jet-black curly ostrich feather.

I have always felt that the reason I was selected as a scout was that the horse I owned and rode was a marvel. She was a golden roan, very fast and powerful, and the most sensible horse in my regiment. For my own part, I was at the time an A1 "Tenderfoot." I could ride very well, it is true, I could speak a few words of the Boer *Taal*, I was only twenty-three years of age, but I had only been in South Africa for six months. The name of my mare was "Pom-Pom," so called because at my baptism of fire at Colesburg a few months previously she had been wounded by a fragment of pom-pom shell.

My first day with the new outfit was "not so hot," although the thermometer registered about a hundred degrees. I was ragged about my swanky Zeiss field-glasses, my wrist-watch (yes, believe it or not, we wore wrist-watches thirty-three years ago), my handkerchief, which I carried up my sleeve, my nickel-plated spurs, and English hunting-crop. I looked more like a Christmas-tree than a dyed-in-the-wool member of the famous Montmorencys.

The first few days I spent in the new camp and was not ordered out for patrol duty. We were at this time bivouacked under a *kopje* about one mile from where my former regiment was camped, and I rode over once or twice to display myself in the new head-dress and to purloin an occasional canteen of rum for the older, seasoned scouts; thereby somewhat appeasing the ragging I was still receiving.

About the fourth night after joining I was ordered to hold myself in readiness to proceed at daylight with eleven other scouts under Lieutenant Woodcock—destination not disclosed—three days' rations to be carried. Fellow-scouts informed me it was the usual daily sacrifice, being otherwise interpreted as follows. Shortly before daylight we saddled up in the bitterly cold morning, mounted, and silently formed parties of four. The lieutenant was waiting for us at his tent mounted and ready. Silently we marched away at a walk. My half-section informed me we would proceed for about two hours, endeavour to locate a Boer *commando*, draw their fire, endeavour to ascertain their strength, possibly lose a man or two (which was designated the "daily sacrifice"), try to capture a Boer horseman and question him concerning the enemy, visit a farmhouse or



so and search for hidden ammunition, interrogate any stray natives, possibly fight a small action with a Boer patrol, then return to camp. We had proceeded a mile or so when we heard a whistle behind us and saw a rider coming towards us. He soon joined Lieutenant Woodcock. The rider was Winston Spencer Churchill, who had been captured by the Boers in an armoured train disaster months previously, had been imprisoned at Pretoria, where, after hiding under the floor of his prison for weeks, he had escaped north to a disused coal-mine, hidden underground again, and finally made his way on foot to Portuguese East Africa and thence back to the British forces. On this cold morning he had obtained permission to accompany us, as he was now a war correspondent writing for *The Times*. Little did we imagine that this young man would in future be one of the greatest statesmen England has ever known and First Lord of the Admiralty during the World War! As we rode along he chatted and laughed with each of us. The order soon came to march in extended order, and the lieutenant sent a scout some half-mile ahead of us. We were coming to rising ground now. I was on the extreme right flank and occasionally took a look ahead of me, using my powerful Zeiss glasses, but could see no signs of life anywhere. We marched like this another half-hour, when suddenly pick-pock, pick-pock, zoom! We were under a heavy rifle-fire. At the first shot I dismounted and, holding my reins over my arm, took cover behind an ant-heap and commenced to fire, although no living target was to be seen. I looked also to my left for orders to be signalled. Suddenly one of our horses went down, killed. It was Winston Churchill's horse. He ran towards the nearest man—my subsection—grasped his stirrup leather, and the pair proceeded to take cover among some rocks. The remainder of us then closed in, took temporary cover, sent our led horses to the rear, and then proceeded to fight it out. We could see no sign of the scout who had been sent ahead. The Boer fire became heavier, and soon we saw fifty Boers galloping down towards us. We waited until they were within range, gave them a few volleys, and saw one saddle emptied. The Boers were stopped long enough to enable us to regain our led horses and to proceed under cover of a *kopje* in the direction of our camp. Winston Churchill was now holding on to the lieutenant's stirrup leather. Then a welcome sound. Heavy rifle-firing on our left—our own Lee-Enfield rifles speaking. Our cavalry were riding "hell for leather" towards the Boers. Our job for the day was done, except that we must find out the

fate of our leading scout. The cavalry found him later, he and his horse both unwounded. The Boers had let him advance right through them, but he found it out and hid in a *donga* until all was quiet.

So much for my first day of scouting ; but what a difference it would have made to the World War if the bullet that was responsible for the sacrifice of Winston Churchill's horse had ended his career then and there !

Weeks passed, and almost every day saw us out in front of the cavalry on our "daily sacrifice" assignment. The Boers began to fear our scouts, and one night fifty of us scouts were camped on a *kopje*. Unknown to us Brother Boer brought up some twelve-pounder guns within range of our camp. At daybreak I was making tea over an individual camp-fire, when suddenly our camp was heavily shelled. I ran over to the horse-lines to get Pom-Pom under cover, then returned to get my tea. A big hole in the ground was all I could see of my camp-fire !

Scouting has its comical side also. On the advance from Bloemfontein towards Pretoria under Lord Roberts, I was scouting a supposed Boer position and was all alone. Coming to a spruit, or small river, I found a ford, also fairly fresh cart-wheel tracks. Deciding to follow these tracks, I was crossing the stream when Pom-Pom stumbled and almost dived into the river. I caught a momentary view of large handles on a big leather case. Dismounting in the stream I fished with my arms under water, grabbed a handle, and with great difficulty dragged it to the muddy bank. I was excited, as I imagined it might be a Boer dispatch-box which had fallen from a cape-cart into the spruit. With difficulty I got the case up on my saddle, and, choosing all the safest cover I could find for fear of being seen by a Boer patrol and captured with my valuable possession, I finally reached camp. Instead of reporting my luck to my own unit I took the dispatch-box to Brigade Headquarters—a glaring breach of regulations—but we scouts were not strong on regulations, and I was all on edge to see if I had stumbled on the secrets of the Boer Army. A staff officer I approached seemed as excited as I was about it, and we carried the case into his own tent. An orderly forced the heavy brass lock with a steel tent-peg, and the first thing to come to hand was a large map printed on oilskin. I felt assured now that I had scouted out valuable information, especially as the map proved to be one of the Orange Free State. The next wet bundle the orderly produced from the

treasure-chest proved to be a fine set of six military razors—and then the shock came. The valuable dispatch-box I had found contained nothing more or less than the official barber's tools : razors, scissors, combs, hair-cutting clippers, etc., the whole belonging to the Welsh Regiment. They had fallen out of a transport wagon when crossing the spruit weeks previously. Of course the story leaked out, and my fellow-scouts conferred on me the nickname of " Barber " ever after.

We were in advance of Lord Roberts's huge army, scouting ahead towards our goal—Pretoria—and the end of the war, as we then imagined, little knowing that after we had taken Pretoria we should remain in the field fighting the elusive Boer for two more years.

On nearing the famous Vaal River our scouts fought daily a series of sharp engagements. The steep banks of the Vaal River afforded the enemy excellent cover, and they put up a stout resistance. On the day Lord Roberts's army crossed the Vaal my unit was engaged all day—on the extreme left flank in a rearguard action. We arrived at the Vaal just as the last units were making the crossing. Darkness was just setting in. Dog-tired, hungry, bruised, sore, lousy, and ragged, we awaited orders from G.H.Q. To our great humiliation we who had scouted in advance of Lord Roberts's army throughout the terrifically long march were ordered to camp on the south side of the Vaal. But our displeasure was soon forgotten. That night I experienced one of the greatest thrills of my life, and we were rewarded ten thousand times for remaining practically alone on the south side of the Vaal. Darkness came on, and suddenly, as we looked across the deep and shiny waters of the Vaal, as if by magic tiny lights began to shine, at first scores, then hundreds, then thousands and tens of thousands. They were the camp-fires of " Bob's " great army. When you have marched for many weary months seeing only your own small unit, a huge camp sprung suddenly into being in a few hours is an awe-inspiring and never-to-be-forgotten sight.

The myriads of lights began to irradiate the silent veldt. A strange stillness prevailed. Twenty thousand men were eating around the camp-fires. The silent waters of old Father Vaal began to shimmer with a brightness and brilliance never before in all the ages seen on his face—an awe-inspiring sight. Clear and quivering calls from hundreds of bugles sounding the Last Post ascended to the skies. The camp-fires began to

die down. From my vantage-point half a mile across the river I had been watching what was up to that time the greatest sight I had ever seen. And then from the camp of the Irish regiments one single soldier sitting at his camp-fire started in a beautifully clear tenor voice to sing, "I'll take you home again, Kathleen." The refrain was taken up by other men, then by other regiments, until the whole of Bob's "twenty thousand horse and foot" were singing and seeming to me to be keeping perfect time. As long as I live I shall never forget this night on the Vaal River.

We were given a few days' rest before the advance from Johannesburg to Pretoria, other scouts taking our place. We took an active part, however, in the battle of Johannesburg, and received an extra clasp to our medals for this hard-fought engagement.

I succeeded in securing a hot bath in Johannesburg—my first in six months—and, feeling like a two-year-old, rode out of the city with my comrades. As usual we were on the advance again. About thirty miles outside Pretoria I was riding along carefully, taking as few risks as possible, when I saw lights ahead of me. It was almost dark. Advancing to investigate I found myself stopped by a high and heavy barbed-wire fence, which I cut with my wire-clippers, and another quarter of a mile took me to a long and low corrugated-iron house. I could smell coffee boiling, and I had a yen for coffee at that instant. The place looked peaceful enough, and I did not expect to find any armed Boers inside. Entering the house by the kitchen door unannounced, I startled two women who were cooking. They seemed too frightened to move. I asked for coffee. They made no move to give me any, so I helped myself to a cup, poured it full of coffee, added sugar and canned milk which were on the table, and proceeded to drink some. The younger of the two women then had recovered sufficiently from her fright and left the house. In my very bad Dutch I endeavoured to talk to the now terrifically frightened remaining woman, who made signs for me to leave the house and kept saying "*Foosack vooinek*," meaning "Beat it, soldier."

Presently I heard footsteps. The younger woman returned with a harmless-looking young man dressed in white. In very broken English he told me: "You are in the Pretoria Lazaretto. We are all lepers here. You must not drink our coffee or eat our food. You must go."

I did not need a second invitation to leave, and felt uncomfortable for months after, although I was assured that leprosy carries very little danger of contagion.

The next day we entered Pretoria, the home of the Boer President, Oom Paul Kruger. Here I found I had been given a commission, and for the time being my scouting days were over and not again to be resumed for a period of eighteen years, when, on the Murmansk coast in Arctic North Russia, my South African experiences stood me in good stead on the advance by sleigh from Sovoka to Archangel.

# THE FEVER SHIP

ANONYMOUS

I SAILED from Liverpool for Jamaica, and after a pleasant voyage, arrived at my destination, and discharged my cargo. My vessel was called the *Lively Charlotte*, a tight brig, well found for trading, and navigated by thirteen hands. I reloaded with sugar and rum for Halifax, intending to freight from that place for England, before the setting in of winter. This object I could only achieve by using double diligence, allowing a reasonable time for accidental obstacles. My brig was built sharp, for sailing fast, and I did not trouble myself about convoy (it was during war), as I could run a fair race with a common privateer; and we trusted to manœuvring, four heavy carronades, and a formidable show of painted ports and quakers, for escaping capture by any enemy not possessing such an overwhelming superiority of force as would give him confidence to run boldly close alongside and find out what were really our means of defence.

I speedily shipped what provisions and necessaries I wanted, and set sail. A breeze scarcely sufficient to fill the canvas carried us out of Port Royal harbour. The weather was insufferably hot; the air seemed full of fire, and the redness of the atmosphere, not long before sunset, glared as intensely as the flame of a burning city. Jamaica was very sickly; the yellow fever had destroyed numbers of the inhabitants, and three-fourths of all newcomers speedily became its victims. I had been fortunate enough to lose only two men during my stay of three or four weeks (Jack Wilson and Tom Waring), but they were the two most sturdy and healthy seamen in the brig; the first died in thirty-nine hours after he was attacked, and the second on the fourth day. Two hands besides were ill when we left, which reduced to nine the number capable of performing duty. I imagined that putting to sea was the best plan I could adopt to afford the sick a chance of recovery, and

retard the spreading of the disorder among such as remained in health ; but I was deceived. I carried the contagion with me, and on the evening of the day on which we lost sight of land, another hand died, and three more were taken ill. Still I congratulated myself I was no worse off, since other vessels had lost half their crews while in Port Royal, and some in much less time than we had remained there. We sailed prosperously through the windward passage, so close to Cuba that we could plainly distinguish the trees and shrubs growing upon it, and then shaped our course north-easterly, to clear the Bahamas and gain the great ocean.

We had seen and lost sight of Crooked Island three days, when it became all at once a dead calm ; even the undulation of the sea, commonly called the ground swell, subsided ; the sails hung slackened from the yards ; the vessel slept like a turtle on the ocean, which became as smooth as a summer mill-pond. The atmosphere could not have sustained a feather ; cloudless and clear, the blue serene above and the water below were alike spotless, shadowless, and stagnant. Disappointment and impatience were exhibited by us all, while the sun, flaring from the burning sky, melted the pitch in the rigging till it ran down on the decks, and a beefsteak might have been broiled on the anchor-fluke. We could not pace the planks without blistering our feet, until I ordered an awning over the deck for our protection ; but still the languor we experienced was overpowering.

A dead calm is always viewed with an uneasy sensation by seamen, but in the present case it was more than usually unwelcome. To the sick it denied the freshness of the breeze that would have mitigated in some degree their agonies ; and it gave a predisposition to the healthy to imbibe the contagion, lassitude and despondency being its powerful auxiliaries. Assisted by the great heat, the fever appeared to decompose the very substance of the blood, and its progress was so rapid, that no medicine could operate before death closed the scene of suffering. I had no surgeon on board, and from a medicine-chest I in vain administered the common remedies. But what remedies could be expected to act with efficacy, where the disease destroyed life almost as quickly as the current of life circulated ? I had now but five men able to do duty, and never can I forget my feelings when three of these were taken ill on the fourth day of our unhappy inactivity. One of the sick expired, as I stood by his cot, in horrible convulsions. His skin was of a deep saffron hue ; watery blood oozed from every

pore, and from the corners of his eyes ; he seemed dissolving into blood, liquifying into death. Another man rushed upon deck in a fit of delirium, and sprang over the ship's side, into the very jaws of the sharks that hovered ravenous around us, and seemed to be aware of the terrible havoc death was making.

I had now the dreadful prospect of seeing all that remained perish, and prayed to God I might not be the last ; for I should then become an ocean solitary, dragging on a life of hours in every second. A day's space must then be an age of misery. There was still no appearance of a breeze springing up ; the horrible calm appeared as if it would endure for ever. A storm would have been welcome. The irritating indolence, the frightful loneliness and tranquillity that reigned around, united with the frequent presence of human dissolution thinning our scanty number, was more than the firmest nerves could sustain without yielding to despair. Sleep fled far from me ; I paced the deck at night, gazing upon the remnant of my crew in silence, and they upon me, hopeless and speechless. I looked at the brilliant stars that shone in tropical glory, with feverish and impatient feelings, wishing I were among them, or bereft of consciousness, or were anything but a man. A heavy presentiment of increasing evil bore down my spirits. I regarded the unruffled sea, dark and glassy, and the reflection of the heavens in it, as a sinner would have contemplated the mouth of hell. The scene, so beautiful at any other time, was terrible under my circumstances. I was overwhelmed with present and anticipated misery. Thirty years I had been accustomed to a sea life, but I had never contemplated that so horrible a situation as mine was possible, I had never imagined that any state half so frightful could exist, though storms had often placed my life in jeopardy, and I had been twice shipwrecked. In the last misfortune, mind and body were actively employed, and I had no leisure to brood over the future. To be passive, as I now was, with destruction creeping towards me inch by inch ; to perceive the most horrible fate advancing slowly upon me, and be obliged to await its approach, pinioned, fixed to the spot, powerless, unable to keep the hope of deliverance alive by exertion : such a situation was the extreme of mortal suffering, a pain of mind language is inadequate to describe, and I endured in silence the full weight of its infliction.

My mate and cabin-boy were now taken with the disease ; and on the evening of the fifth day, Will Stokes, the oldest seaman on board, breathed his last, just at the going down of the sun. At midnight another died. By the light of the stars



we committed them to the ocean, though, while wrapping the hammock round the body of the last, the effluvia from the rapid putrefaction was so overpowering and nauseous, that it was with difficulty got upon deck and flung into its unfathomable grave. The dull splash of the carcass, as it plunged, I shall never forget, raising lucid circles on the dark unruffled water, and breaking the obstinate silence of the time ; it struck my heart with a thrilling chillness ; a rush of indescribable feeling came over me. Even now this sepulchral sound strikes at times on my ear during sleep, in its loneliness of horror, and I fancy I am again in the ship. These mournful entombments were viewed by us at last with that unconcern which is shown by men rendered desperate from circumstances. Disease and dissolution were become everyday matters to us, and the fear of death had lost its power ; nay, we rather trembled at the thought of surviving ; thus does habitude fit us for the most terrible situations.

The last precaution I took was to remove the sick to the deck, under the shelter of a wet sail, to afford them coolness. The next that died was my old townsman, Job Watson. Just after I had seen him expire, about ten o'clock in the evening, when all around was like the stillness of a dead world, I was leaning over the taffrail, and looking upon the ocean's face, that from its placidity and attraction to the eye was to me and mine like an angel of destruction clothed in beauty, when on a sudden I became free from anxiety, obdurate, reckless of everything. I imagined I had taken leave of hope for ever, and an apathy came upon me little removed from despair. I was ready for my destiny, come when it might. I got rid of a load of anxiety that I could not have carried much longer ; so that, even when the rising moon showed me the body of the mate, which we had thrown into the water, floating on its back, half disenclosed from its hammock—when I distinctly saw its livid and ghastly features covered only by an inch of transparent sea, and a huge shark preparing his hungry jaws to prey upon it—I drew not back, but kept my eye coldly upon it, as if it had been the most indifferent object upon earth ; for I was as insensible to emotion as a statue would have been. This insensibility enabled me to undertake any office for the sick, and to drag the *bodies of the dead to the ship's side and fling them overboard ; for at last no one else was left to do it.* All, save myself, were attacked with the disorder, and one by one died before the ninth day was completed, save James Robson, the least athletic man I had, and who, judging from constitution, was but little

likely to have survived. The disorder left him weak as a child. I gave him the most nourishing things I could find : I carried him, a mere skeleton, into my cabin, and placed him on a fresh bed, flinging his own and all the other beds overboard. I valued him as the only living thing with me in the vessel ; though, had he died, I should at the time have felt little additional pain. I regarded him as one brute animal would have looked at another in such a situation.

How the ship was to be navigated by one man, and what means I possessed of keeping her afloat in case blowing weather should come on, gave me no apprehension : I was too much proof against the fear of the future, or any danger that it might bring. Robson could give me no assistance ; I had therefore to rely upon my own exertions for everything. If the vessel ever moved again, I must hand and steer—though, from the continuance of the calm, it did not seem likely I should be soon called upon to do either. I kept watch at night upon deck, and could sleep, either by day or night, only by short snatches, extended at full length near the helm. On the tenth night, while the sea was yet in the repose of the grave around me, I fell into a doze, and was assailed with horrible dreams, that precluded my receiving refreshment from rest. Millions of living things, which had ascended from the caverns of the deep, or been engendered from the stagnation and heat, seemed to play in snaky antics on its surface. I aroused myself, and the silence on every side seemed more terrible than ever. Clouds were rising over the distant sea-line and obscuring the stars, and the ocean put on a gloomy aspect. No sailor was now pacing the deck on his accustomed watch. The want of motion in the ship, and her powerless sails hanging in festoons amid the diminishing starlight, added to the solitary feeling which, in spite of my apathy, I experienced ; I thought myself cut off from mankind for ever, and that my ship, beyond where winds ever blew, would lie and rot upon the corrupting sea. I forgot the melancholy fate of my crew at this moment, and thought, with comparative unconcern, that the time must soon come when, the last draught of water being finished, I too must die. The next night, half slumbering, a thousand strange images would come before my sight ; the countenance of my last mate, or some one of the crew, was frequently among them, distorted and fitted upon uncouth bodies. I felt feverish and unwell on awaking. One moment I fancied I saw a vessel pass the ship under full sail, and with a stiff breeze—and then a second ; while no ruffle appeared on the ocean near mine,

and I hailed them in vain. Now I heard the tramp of feet upon the deck, and the whisper of voices, as of persons walking near me, whom I uselessly challenged : this was followed by the usual obdurate silence. I felt no fear ; for Nature had no visitation for mortal man more appalling than I had already encountered : and to the ultimate of evils with social man, as I have before observed, I was insensible ; for what weight could social ideas of good or evil have with me at that moment ?

The morning of the eleventh day of my suffering I went down into the cabin, to take some refreshment to Robson. Though at intervals in the full possession of his senses, the shortest rational conversation exhausted him, while talking in his incoherent fits did not produce the same debilitating effect. " Where is the mate ? " he wildly asked me ; " Why am I in your cabin, captain ? Have they flung Waring overboard yet ? " I contented myself with giving him general answers, which appeared to satisfy him. I feared to tell him we were the only survivors ; for the truth, had he chanced to comprehend it in its full force, might have been fatal. On returning upon the deck, I observed that clouds were slowly forming, while the air became doubly oppressive and sultry. The intensity of the sun's rays was exchanged for a closer and even more suffocating heat, that indicated an alteration of some kind in the atmosphere. Hope suddenly awoke in my bosom again : a breeze might spring up, and I might get free from my horrible captivity. I took an observation, and found that I was clear of the rocks and shoals of the Bahamas, towards which I feared a current might have insensibly borne me ; all I could do, therefore, in case the wind blew, was to hang out a signal of distress, and try to keep the sea until I fell in with some friendly vessel.

I immediately took measures for navigating the ship by myself. I fastened a rope to secure the helm in any position I might find needful, so that I might venture to leave it a few minutes when occasion required. I went aloft and cut away the topsails which I could not reef, and reduced the canvas all over the ship as much as possible, leaving only one or two of the lower sails set ; for if it blew fresh, I could not have taken them in, and the ship might perish, while by doing this I had some chance of keeping her alive.

I now anxiously watched the clouds which seemed to be in motion, and the sight was a cordial to me. At last the sea began to heave with gentle undulations ; a slight ripple succeeded and bore new life with it. I wept for joy, and then laughed, as

I saw it shake the sails and then gradually fill them ; and when at length the brig moved, just at noon on the eleventh day our becalming commenced, I became almost mad with delight. It was like a resurrection from the dead ; it was the beginning of a new existence with me. Fearful as my state then was in reality, it appeared a heaven to that which I had been in. The hope of deliverance aroused me to new energies. I felt hungry, and ate voraciously ; for till that moment I had scarcely eaten enough to sustain life. The chance of once more mingling with my fellow-men filled my imagination, and braced every fibre of my frame almost to breaking. The ship's motion perceptibly increased ; the ripple under her bow at length became audible, she felt additional impulse, moved yet faster, and at length cut through the water at the rate of four or five knots an hour. This was fast enough for her safety, though not for my impatience. I steered her large before the wind for some time, and then kept her as near as possible in the track of vessels bound for Europe, certain that, carrying so little sail, I must be speedily overtaken by some ship that could render me assistance. Nor was I disappointed in my expectation. After steering two days with a moderate breeze, during which time I never left the helm, a large West Indiaman came up with me, and gave me every necessary aid. By this means I was at length enabled to reach Halifax, and finally the river Mersey, about five weeks later than the time I had formerly calculated for my voyage.

# SHIPWRECK AND A STABBING

By

DARE DUBOIS-PHILLIPS

THE wanderlust has been in me since my feet first toddled audaciously out of the safe confines of the nursery. It has urged me, in a continual repugnance for any kind of dull security, into many queer places and into many queer situations. In retrospect, the discomforts of being in these situations become negligible, and the experiences themselves acquire a great attractiveness. And, even from such experiences whose discomforts were so acute as to make merely looking back on them unpleasant, I feel I have gained something; for the taste of adventure is salty, and a sugary flavour makes it vapid and sickly.

In company with the wanderer's restlessness, impatience has ever been my besetting sin, so let me begin my tale straight-away . . . in the water! For, since I have been in hot water of one kind or another for a great part of my life, I can think of no more suitable opening, though admittedly I should have preferred the water a great deal hotter on the occasion in question.

It took place some five or six years before the Great War, during the Midnight Yacht Race run annually from Liverpool to the Isle of Man.

At the time I was part-owner of a craft which, I believed, would stand a very good chance of finishing the eighty miles of the course ahead of her rivals. She was a converted fishing-smack of about fifty tons, stout and seaworthy, and with a surprising turn of speed, considering her origin. Another point in her favour was that the man sailing her with me was a splendid yachtsman called Aindow, the son of a famous family of fishermen.

As Aindow and I sailed the *Kathleen*, as she was named,

prior to the race, we became more and more enthusiastic about her chances. As far as I was concerned, I was looking forward to the run immensely. I was recently home from soldiering in India, and was savouring joyfully all the delights of home, high amongst which I placed my old love of yachting.

The Army interlude had been great fun at first. I had entered the Artillery, and had been lucky enough to be drafted out East quite early in my career. I revelled in the novelty of India, and played polo indefatigably, but gunning itself soon began to lose what charms it had for me. In addition, I found that my character did not react at all amiably to the constant discipline and artificial restrictions of the life. In the end, I came to the conclusion that the work of a gunner did not hold enough interest to grip a man for the whole of his existence, and I handed in my papers.

Fortunately, my father, who had recently retired from the Royal Navy with the rank of captain, had never taken kindly to my incomprehensible decision to join the Army in preference to the Senior Service, and was now inclined to congratulate himself that this latest action of mine quite bore out what he had said before about the degradation of Navy-men's sons who went into the Army.

For my own part, sailing the *Kathleen* along the English coasts in the gusty March weather, I was inclined to agree with my father that the man who would exchange the life of a sailor for anything else was nothing but a fool.

We started on the stroke of midnight in a gale. Aboard our craft were Aindow, myself, and two hands. The yachts moved off together down the misty Mersey, their tall, straining canvases gleaming whitely in the lights of the waterfront. It was clearly blowing up for a real night of wind. So fierce and sudden were the gusts of the gale that two of our competitors had their mainmasts broken before they were over the bar.

The *Kathleen* was running second, with an Irish craft in the lead, and the rest of the field straggling behind in a bunch. We crossed the bar snugly reefed-down.

In the open sea, the wind was whistling-wild, battering at us, and the sea was tumbling in hissing whitecaps. We had the merest glimpse of the Irish yacht which had led us down the river swinging off, tight-reefed, on a southerly tack. Immediately afterwards, she was swallowed up in the howling night. Even had we had a better sight of her than that brief second in the peep of the Bar Lightship, we could not have

watched her longer, for we had plenty of other matters to engage our attention.

There was no sailing close-hauled that night. We had to tack and tack monotonously to keep way on her. Aindow was a fine sailor, and got every inch out of her before she fell away again.

The gale now was wrenching at the *Kathleen* with the fury of a mad thing, and the seas were pounding at her quarters. As we shouted at one another, the wind would snatch at our words and throw them high into the night. The seas were running as high as the mainmast, and at a terrific speed.

It seemed to me that we were making no headway whatsoever, but Aindow assured me that the wind would drop soon. In the vortex of that howling storm, I found it hard to believe him.

"You'll see," he promised with calm certitude.

I did.

In a while a distinct drop in the force of the wind was noticeable. Within half an hour a still more definite drop was noticeable, until we experienced what might almost have been called a lull, though the sea was still running as high as ever.

I was all eagerness to get way on our craft while we could. We let out a couple of reefs of the mainsail, and made some distance. I pressed Aindow to put on more canvas, but he seemed doubtful, sniffing at the weather judiciously. The lull continuing, my impatience grew too much for me, and on my own responsibility I piled on more sail.

As the yacht strained forward, a squall came roaring down, and hit us before we could take in an inch of sail. Our mainmast shuddered, snapped, and came down; so deafening was the howling of the squall, that I could not hear the splintering of the wood.

The seas lashed and pounded at us, as we lay there helpless, with the wreckage of the mainmast shackling us. Great waves broke over us, tiny things in a toy boat, hacking at the tangle with axes to right the fearful list to leeward.

Our task was hopeless from the first. We could never hope to cut away the wreckage in time, with that sea running. A mountainous wave descended on us like a falling tower, enveloping us. We felt the crippled *Kathleen* give a kind of despairing kick as the shock hit her, then she began to roll terrifyingly. Next moment we were in the water. With the list she had already, the force of the wave had been too much for our boat, and she had turned turtle.

The water of the Irish Sea on that wild March midnight was like ice. In a flurry of foam I fought among a tangle of kicking spars and clutching ropes to get to the surface. I came up, swallowing great gulps of air mixed with spindrift. I hung on to a spar, and waited till my eyes became accustomed to the blank darkness.

When they did so, I made out three white blurs through the blackness and the veils of the blowing spume; I knew then that my three companions had all managed to fight their way to the air. Beside me there swelled up the gleaming timbers of the boat, riding bottom-upward.

I saw a white shadow of a face at my side. I cannot tell which of my brothers in misfortune it belonged to. A hand grasped my arm, and I was thankful for the sense of fellowship the touch gave me.

The hours passed, and the ferocity of the wind and sea did not abate or lessen. By silent consent, the four of us got as close to one another as we could, clutching at pieces of wreckage with numbed fingers. Every now and again we were forced to let go of our handholds, as a spar would wildly kick up on end in the clutch of the storm, and to strike out for more open water to prevent our heads being smashed by the falling spar.

As time went on, it became more and more difficult to regain our handholds again. Our frozen fingers slid weakly and sulkily from what we tried to clutch, and no effort of our aching muscles could make the cold, useless lumps that were our hands grip on to anything. I remember waiting dully for the time when the numbness would creep up my arm, so that I could not raise it out of the water; and then I would sink, without the power of resistance. . . .

A stormy dawn broke, and we were still hanging blankly to our rolling spars. The bitter cold of the water had numbed our minds almost as much as our bodies. We looked at each other dully, with no expression on our faces.

As the light grew stronger, the wind began to fall, and the pounding blows of the sea on the battered hull of the *Kathleen* grew less devilish. Now there was no need to strike out from our spars in fear that they would rise up and strike us. Our heads drooped, and we hung on in a state that was practically unconsciousness.

For my own part, I know I was practically all in, when a Peel trawler picked us up. I was drugged by the cold and the effort of self-preservation which had kept me hanging on,



and was on the point of letting go and sinking into rest in the arms of the sea.

I have no notion of what happened, after being hauled aboard the trawler, but I must have come to again quickly, for we were sailing gaily into Peel harbour, when I woke up, with the hull of the *Kathleen* being towed astern.

It transpired afterwards that we had been picked up off Douglas, and we estimated we had spent between eight and nine hours in the water.

The *Kathleen's* injuries turned out to be by no means fatal. It appeared that we could safely sail back to Liverpool in her, once she was repaired. When that was done, we made arrangements to make the return journey—taking good care to wait for a very definite spell of calm weather first!

It was in bright sunshine that we sailed home.

\* \* \* \* \*

Although the effects were not serious, the *Kathleen* episode had knocked up my general health a good deal. I suggested, and my family agreed, that I needed a change—a remedy to which I was never in my life particularly averse!

A sea-voyage was put forward as a cure, and to this we agreed also. . . . But not for long! I was of the opinion that a cruise in a luxury liner did not constitute a change at all in the real meaning of the word. I meant, I said, to work my passage on something less luxurious and more exciting; and forthwith I visited an acquaintance who got me the berth of purser on the s.s. *Lugano*, of the Glyn Line, bound for Havana, Galveston, Texas, Newport News, Virginia, and on up the U.S. coast to New York.

Highly pleased with the arrangement, I went to my father and diffidently suggested that a small enque would not come amiss to a young man setting off overseas.

"If you want to travel your own way, you must do so," said my father. "You say you prefer to work your passage than to travel as a passenger. Well, you must work your passage. . . ."

There was no answer to that, and I did not attempt one; and so it was that the s.s. *Lugano* slipped out of the Mersey one grey morning, carrying aboard her a purser with very few pounds in his pocket, but a gay expectancy in his heart.

My prelude to adventure was a dismal one. The food was sickening; the boat smelled fearsomely; she wallowed like a pig in anything of a sea; my work was dull and uninteresting. Following so closely on my experience during the Midnight

Yacht Race, it was no wonder that I began to grow less and less enamoured of the close acquaintance of the sea.

After a wretched voyage, we docked at last at Havana. I need not say that I wasted no time in putting on my best suit and going out to explore the delights of the town. As we were to be upwards of two weeks in harbour, discharging and re-loading cargo, I took a suite in the Hotel Telegrapho, and prepared to enjoy myself.

On the night of my arrival, I went to the theatre to see La Bella Carmella, the great Spanish dancer of the day. I took the stage-box—which I could ill afford—and thus paved the way to a charming encounter, which was to end rather depressingly as far as I was concerned.

La Bella Carmella was enchanting. Dancing has always been a passion with me, and I considered myself to be a judge of what was good and what was merely ordinary in the art.

Immediately she came on to the stage I could see that Carmella's dancing was something very much out of the ordinary ; and, not only was her dancing superb, but Carmella herself was amazingly beautiful.

The Cuban audience went wild over her. She was clearly a national idol—and small wonder ! At the end of an old Spanish dance, amid rapturous yells from her adorers, she took the rose she was holding between her white teeth . . . and flung it into the stage-box.

In the accepted romantic tradition, I caught the flower, and bowed, pressing it to my lips. . . . Luckily I had succeeded in catching it without too much Nordic awkwardness ! Smiling, and kissing her hands to her shouting audience, she moved like a flame into the wings.

I wasted no time in sending a note round to her dressing-room, saying, in bad Spanish, how much I had been affected by her wonderful dancing, and inquiring if I might visit her back-stage.

To my great satisfaction, her answer was that I might.

I found her the centre of a circle of Latin worshippers. I added my heartfelt compliments to theirs, and she talked to me, with charming graciousness, for a while. I left, feeling very pleased with myself, proudly displaying the rose she had thrown me.

Imagine my delight the next morning when, passing through the lounge of the Hotel Telegrapho, I encountered her again, and discovered that she also was staying in the hotel. After that, we met many times—more by design than

accident, as far as I was concerned!—and had several long and delightful talks. She was a modest and charming woman, devoted to her art and without any of the affected airs of the *prima donna* about her. I told her of my own humble devotion to dancing, and we would argue and agree, sometimes for hours, on our pet topic.

Then came the anti-climax.

I had just left Carmella, and was walking through the busy lobby of the hotel, when abruptly I experienced a sharp pain in my back, and heard a soft thud. I swung round, and saw everybody staring at me in horror and, some yards up the lobby, a man's dark face glaring at me, twisted horribly in the most dreadful grimace of pure hate I have ever seen.

I felt a strange dizziness swimming over me. Just beside me was a long mirror. I turned half round and looked into the mirror.

The haft of a knife was sticking out of my back, and a great crimson smudge was slowly spreading round the haft, startling against the snowy whiteness of my duck jacket. . .

My sense of dizziness was too great for me to grasp the full horror of the moment. I stared at the spreading blot of red, twisting my neck to watch it, and at the same time the dizziness spread in my mind. I saw the floor rising up to hit me, and, throwing out an arm to guard my face, toppled into unconsciousness. . . .

There was, of course, no mystery about the reasons for my misadventure. La Bella Carmella's worshippers were legion, and the sight of her so often in my company had been too much for one of them. Torturing himself with the belief that I was her lover, while he was banished from the warmth of her smile—perhaps the poor fellow had never even spoken to his beloved—had worked his passionate Latin temperament into such a frenzy of jealousy that he had drawn his knife and thrown it at me, with the sinister skill of the Cuban.

I never heard what happened to my impetuous assailant. Luckily, his weapon had made no serious internal puncture, but it was aimed accurately enough to cause me a great deal of pain and discomfort, and I was hardly in a position, as a result, to make exhaustive inquiries about the thrower.

Within a week I was out of hospital. By the time the *Lugano* put out to sea, I was almost normal again. Before making for Galveston, we paid calls at some of the lesser Cuban ports and at some of the smaller islands; by the time we put into Matanzas, our last port of call before Galveston,



*The haft of a knife was sticking out of my back.*



I was as fit as ever I was, just as though my back had never known what a Cuban knife-point feels like.

It was at Galveston that my love for the sea, already sapped, withered altogether and died.

We were lying off the town, unloading cargo into a lighter. I, as purser, was in the latter craft, checking the bales as they were lowered from the *Lugano*. It was very hot in the forenoon sun, and I was dressed in only a shirt and drill shorts. From astern of the *Lugano* there was a great noise of threshing water, where some of the sailors were fishing for shark, with a rope for line and a great hunk of pork for bait.

The seas round Cuba are literally infested with shark. We used to fish for the brutes all round the islands, and I have seen us haul in four in one morning.

They are hated with an amazing *personal* hatred by the natives, and the divers who do water-stunts for pennies in Havana Harbour display amazing courage when attacked by shark. Their method of dealing with the man-eating horrors is neat and original. They take with them into the water a stick about a foot long, sharpened at both ends. When the shark attacks, they deftly thrust a hand, with the stick clenched in it, straight inside the brute's mouth. As the great jaws snap, Mr. Shark is neatly impaled through both jaws and rendered helpless for biting.

The beauty of this proceeding in Cuban eyes is that their enemy is caught alive, for, by means of the stick between its jaws, it can be towed to the quayside. The Cubans do not like shark, and they have their own ways of disposing of him after capture. When they have got him where they want him, they tie a barrel over his head and another over his tail, and send him back out to sea—the helpless prey of any marauding fish. Not a pleasant custom. . . . No, they do not like sharks in Cuba.

Among the hands on board the lighter with me, storing away the cargo, was a young Liverpool seaman called Harris. He was standing just at my back, directing the descent of the sling, and I could hear him whistling as he worked.

My head was bent over my notebook. I heard the sling coming down . . . then Harris's whistling suddenly ceased; I heard what sounded like a gasp, then a splash. I turned and sprang to the side of the boat, and looked over. I saw Harris's arms beating the water despairingly. I knew he could not swim. The grisly memory of the sharks tearing at the hunk of pork was in my mind.

I went in after him. It was not a matter of courage. I must admit shamefully that, had I thought for a moment, I should probably have never had the guts to do it. I did not wait to think, but plunged in on the spur of the moment. Perhaps most brave deeds are done thus—unthinkingly.

Young Harris was in a drowning man's panic. He struggled like a madman to wrench himself out of my grasp. Indeed, it was Harris's struggles which saved the lives of both of us—or so an old seaman told us afterwards. A shark, it seems, will never attack a swimmer who is making a great stir in the water. It will wait till he floats or treads water; then will go for him with merciless ferocity.

Harris certainly made enough stir to scare off all the sharks in the Western Atlantic and the Caribbean. He was a big, strong youngster, and it was all I could do to prevent him sinking the pair of us for good, before the other hands could throw a rope to us. However, I managed to keep him afloat till they hauled us to the side of the lighter, and fortunately our rescuers were old shellbacks, who knew the unpleasant ways of sharks. They hauled us aboard with little ceremony but much speed, by the hair or the ears, or whatever they could grab quickest. And, hardly had my feet lifted above the water, than I heard the vicious snap of closing jaws just below.

I looked over the side at the long, sinister shapes swimming in frustrated circles just where we had been splashing. My heart was pounding like a sledge-hammer, my stomach felt queasy with the salt water I had swallowed, in spite of the hot sun I was shivering in my soaked clothing.

"Following the sea is an overrated pastime," I said to myself.

And so, when we put into the port of Galveston, I went ashore, and simply did not go aboard when the *Lugano* sailed out again for Newport News.

In my heart was a sense of freedom, such as I had experienced when my ship had first slipped down the Mersey. Life aboard had been too limited and full of restrictions for my taste. Now I was my own master again.

True, I was practically broke, but the world was wide, and all mine for the looking at. I watched the hull of the *Lugano* slipping over the horizon, and it was as if I had shaken away shackles from my feet.

I turned my face northwards, and made my way out of

Galveston. Before me now the great ranges of Texas rolled away into the distance.

The trail on which I set out that day was to lead me into many curious corners of the world, into the company of many curious types and distortions of human kind, into the company of Death more than once, into many brawls and hasty flights, into many strange occupations.

From that moment I forsook specialisation, and became a free-lance.



# DRINK, DRUGS AND THE HOPE DIAMOND

By

EVALYN WALSH McLEAN

*This episode, written by herself, is from the life of a woman whose father made an enormous fortune during the gold rush at the end of the last century. The incidents she records here occurred just after the death of her idolised father, Tom Walsh, in 1910. Ned McLean is her husband, and Vinson was, at that time, her only child.*

WE went from Atlantic City, after about a month, to our place at Bar Harbour ; but even there my mother kept to her room, the blinds drawn tightly against all light. She said, quite without dramatics, that she wished to follow Father. I tried to talk with her of business matters. Father had left his fortune in trust for us for ten years, half to Mother, half to me, with a joint survivorship arrangement. Even the details of this did not rouse her. However, there was one by whom her interest was aroused for a little : my baby had that power—she adored him.

"It is up to you, Mother," I said to her one day. "I am putting full responsibility for my baby in your hands. Ned and I are going to France."

She got right up, and in a few days she was out and in the garden. She was almost like herself by the time we sailed.

One night we drove down to Vichy in our yellow racing Fiat. I felt an urge to gamble.

Sitting next to me that night was a dear old man, who helped me run the bank. I had begun to play at about ten-thirty in the evening. When I stopped, at four in the morning, I had won about seventy thousand dollars.

Ned had gone to get a drink, and I followed him.

"Where's that money?" Ned asked.

"That old man is looking after it," I said.

"Who is he?"

"I don't know."

We started back to the tables without our drink. The old man had vanished, and with him all my winnings.

For about three minutes Ned and I were wondering just how loud to pitch our voices as we shouted that we had been robbed. Then I saw the old man again. He was approaching, smiling broadly, and had all my winnings, changed into bills of large denomination and neatly packaged. As he handed this to me he introduced himself as the owner of Angostura Bitters. But for all I knew before he might have been a crook.

I talked of going back to the Casino to make another killing, but Ned demurred.

"I'll tell you what we're going to do," he said, "we're packing now and driving back to Paris. If you stay here you'll lose all you've won and more."

We had a consultation about the chauffeur, who was feeling ill. We put my maid on the fast express to Paris, and then Ned told the chauffeur to get in the back of the car.

Ned was most skilful at the wheel and drove with élan, with daring. That day the roads were thick with summer dust and the driver of a car ahead of us was reluctant to let us pass. So Ned opened up the Fiat. Dosed with laudanum and whisky, I did not care about the risk so long as we were not riding in the other fellow's dust. Ned blew three or four times and then went by, our fenders scraping the other man's with a screeching clatter.

When we pulled up in front of the Hotel Bristol in Paris, Ned looked at his watch. We had beaten the fast express by ten minutes. For a minute we exulted and then noticed that the chauffeur had not jumped out to help us. I looked around and there, lying behind us, half on the seat, half on the floor, wide-eyed and slobbering, was the chauffeur. The hotel porter at my cry reached in and touched him. "My God," he said in French, "this one has broken his pipe."

He meant that the chauffeur was dead; and he was right. The man had suffered a heart attack. We had not known before, but apparently he had been suffering from heart trouble for a long time. If he had driven us that day, and died while driving, we should have had a pretty smash up.

Pierre Cartier came to call on us at the Hotel Bristol in

Paris. He carried, tenderly, a package tightly closed with wax seals. His manner was exquisitely mysterious. I suppose a Parisian jewel merchant who seeks to trade among the ultra-rich has to be more or less a stage manager and an actor. Certainly he must be one great salesman. Of course, M. Cartier was dressed as carefully as any woman going to her first big ball. His silk hat, which he swept outward in a flourish, had such a sheen that almost made me believe it had been handed to him new, as he crossed our threshold. His oyster-coloured spats, his knife-edged trousers, his morning coat, the pinkness of his finger-nails, all these and other things about him were made by him to seem to be for me—for Madame McLean—one French compliment.

Ned was still abristle with a day-old beard, and from the folds of a peacock-coloured lounging robe was blinking at me across the breakfast coffee-cups. He had ordered ham and eggs, but he could not bear the sight of them, or of me, or of Pierre Cartier.

"You know about the Turkish Revolution?" said Cartier, and tapped his polished finger-nails upon his package in the manner of a Kellar or Mulholland about to do a trick.

"Why," I told him, "we were in Constantinople when there was shooting in the streets. We went there on our honeymoon. I was admitted, thanks to Mr. Leishmann, to the Sultan's harem—just a lot of fatties, except for two or three who wore Worth gowns."

"Ah, I do not forget such things. You told me when you bought from me your wedding present, the Star of the East. I remember very well. It seems to me you told me then that you had seen a jewel in the harem, a great blue stone that rested against the throat of the Sultan's favourite. A lovely throat, eh?"

"I guess I did." It was too early to argue and, after all, I had seen jewels on Turkish ladies that made my fingers itch.

"Of course you did," said Cartier. "Such things impress one and, besides, not many Western women have been inside such a place."

"It seems to me I did see that stone."

"Naturally. We hear the woman who had that jewel from the Sultan's hand was stabbed to death."

All my boredom vanished as he went on.

"The beginning of this stone's history, as we believe it, was its appearance in Europe when Louis the Fourteenth was King of France. A man named Jean Tavernier had brought

it from India at a time when maharajahs and rajahs kept their wealth in jewels. In that day the world's greatest jewel markets were in the Orient. This stone when it was sold to Louis the Fourteenth was called the Tavernier blue diamond. Marie Antoinette wore it, so we understand; we know positively that there was just this one big blue diamond among the French crown jewels. Marie Antoinette was guillotined and the Revolutionists seized all the wealth. The crown jewels were inventoried, and the Tavernier blue was listed there. Then, along with other important items of the royal regalia, this big blue diamond vanished—stolen, so we think."

By this time Cartier had me on fire with eagerness to see what treasure was sealed up in his package. But, shrewd salesman that he was, he did not open it. He just went on talking, tracing out the jewel's history (or what he freely acknowledged were his beliefs concerning that history). He said he understood that Tavernier had stolen the gem from a Hindu, perhaps a Hindu god. My recollection is that he said Tavernier afterwards was torn and eaten by wild dogs. I might have been excused, that morning, for believing that all the violences of the French Revolution were just the repercussions of that Hindu idol's wrath. M. Cartier was most entertaining.

In after years Sir Caspar Purdon-Clarke, who had been Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, confirmed some of the diamond's history. In 1830, he said, a diamond dealer named Daniel Elason offered for sale in London a big blue gem that weighed  $44\frac{1}{2}$  carats. The Tavernier blue diamond had weighed  $67\frac{1}{2}$  carats; but obviously that stone could not be sold in its old form anywhere in the world with a clear title. It was property stolen from the French Government, and as such would have been attacked and made the object of legal struggles that would have devoured any pseudo-owner's equity. In 1874 another stone, the Brunswick blue, came on the market, and that stone was said to be the lesser part of the Tavernier. The larger stone Elason had sold to Henry Thomas Hope, a London banker. Hope's wife was a Parisienne named Bichat, who kept the big blue gem until her death in 1887. Her daughter had become the Duchess of Newcastle, but when the banker's widow died she left her wealth not to her daughter, then a dowager duchess, but to her daughter's younger son, Lord Francis Pelham Clinton. On one condition, she left to him her country seats, Deepdene, near Dorking, and Blayney Castle in County Monaghan, her other wealth, and her collection of jewels, the

prize of which was the blue Hope diamond. The condition was that he should thereafter call himself "Lord Francis Pelham Clinton Hope." This he agreed to do. Lord Francis squandered his fortune and got deeply into debt. In 1894 he married May Yohe, an American actress. She used to wear her husband's jewels on the stages of music-halls where she was singing. They could not sell or pawn the jewels without risking jail, because Lord and Lady Francis Hope had only a life-interest in them. However, when Lord Francis Hope was declared bankrupt the jewels had disappeared.

Some time after that Sir Caspar Purdon-Clarke received a visit from an old man who made a business of trading bits of jewellery that he picked up at second-hand stores and pawn-brokers' shops. Out of his bag on to a cloth-covered table he dumped an astonishing collection of jewels, so dirty as to be without lustre. The old trader accounted for his possession of these by saying he had bought them at a sheriff's sale in Brighton. They had been among the effects of a music-hall actress who had vanished from her lodgings, with her husband, without paying her landlady or any of the other creditors who had been keeping the couple practically in a state of siege. None but the old jewel trader had supposed the ornaments in the actress's abandoned trunk were other than shoddy imitations, stage jewellery. The cheap lodgings bore out that idea.

When he realised the enormous value of his bargain, the trader went for advice to his old customer, Sir Caspar Purdon-Clarke. The antiquarian at once recognised several items as belonging to the Hope collection, but he most easily recognised the Hope blue diamond; he knew there was not another like it in the world. He advised the trader to get in touch with the trustees of the Hope estate. The old man did so, and for surrendering the collection received a fair reward.

After that the Hope diamond was sold to an American syndicate. "Selim Habib" was the name of the customer who took it off their hands. Did the Turkish Sultan, Abdul-Hamid, ever own it? I do not know for sure. Cartier told me his firm acquired it from a man named Rosenau in Paris.

But I could wait no longer. "Let me see the thing," I said impatiently to Cartier. He breathed quietly without movement for at least a minute, as a concert pianist may do before striking trained fingers to the keys of his instrument. That pause was eloquent, and made me feel—as he wished me to—that I was being privileged beyond most persons in being shown this gem.

No word had been said of price ; this was just a visit from a jewel merchant to a friend whom he admired.

Finally, he stripped away the wrappings, and then held before my eyes the Hope diamond. No other gem I know of is so rare as a real blue diamond ; I have never seen another the precise blue of the Hope diamond. The blue of it is something I am puzzled to name. Peking blue would be too dark, West Point blue too grey. A Hussar's coat ? Delft ! A harbour blue ? Sometimes when I have looked at it, I have felt that Nature, when making it, was half inclined to form a sapphire, but its diamond hardness dispels that thought, and, really, it has no more than a quarter of the blue of soft sapphires. That very rareness of colour is the thing that convinced me the Hope and Brunswick were once a single treasure of the French crown.

The stone was set in diamonds, and, as I looked at it, M. Cartier told me things he did not vouch for : that it was supposed to be ill-favoured, and would bring bad luck to any one who wore or even touched it. Selim Habib is supposed to have been drowned when his ship sank after he had disposed of the gem. We all know about the knife blade that sliced through Marie Antoinette's throat. Lord Hope had plenty of troubles that, to a superstitious soul, might seem to trace back to a heathen idol's wrath. May Yohe, Hope's wife, eloped with handsome, feckless Captain Putnam Bradlee Strong ; maybe that was not bad luck, but it was embarrassing. There were others, too.

You should have heard how solemnly we considered all those possibilities that day in the Hotel Bristol.

"Bad luck objects," I said to Cartier, "for me are lucky."

"Ah, yes," he said. "Madame told me that before, and I remembered. I think, myself, that superstitions of the kind we speak about are baseless. Yet, one must admit, they are amusing."

Ned held the jewel in his hands long after I had put it down.

"How much ?" he asked, although I do not know why, since he almost never paid for things until forced by threats of suit.

Before Cartier could answer I declared myself. "Ned—I don't want the thing. I don't like the setting."

We sailed for the United States aboard the *Rotterdam* in October, and the jewel I was thinking of was no blue diamond, but my precious little son.

A tide goes out, a tide comes in ; so I would describe my leaving him and my coming back. I take no credit for the wild, uncontrolled love I had for little Vinson. I am, myself, the merest speck of life, but I think its fullest force exerts itself whenever life breeds life. I cannot remember when I did not hunger after thrills. That is the key to all my recklessness, I fancy. For some thrills I have paid terrific prices and, properly, I almost paid the biggest one of all for Vinson.

In the McLean private Pullman car we hastened from New York to Bar Harbour. We found the baby strong and smiling, a nine-months-old man, gurgling, laughing, showing just the suggestion of a tooth. What exquisite joy it was to feel his rose-like ear printing itself against my neck, to test the vigour of his kick against my stomach !

But Pierre Cartier had not forgotten me. Mother, Ned, the baby, and I were back at 2020 in November when we had a letter from the Cartier establishment at 712 Fifth Avenue. It was addressed to Ned.

" DEAR SIR,—We have the pleasure to inform you that Mr. Pierre Cartier has arrived from Europe this morning on the *Lusitania*. He has brought with him the documents concerning the Hope diamond. He has a book written by Tavernier himself, who, if you remember, sold the stone to King Louis XIV.

" Besides, he has a book written by the great French expert of all jewels of the crown of France and you will have there all details you require.

" Mr. Pierre Cartier will be glad to be honoured with an appointment, so as to be able to give you all further details you may require.

" Awaiting your kind answer,

" We beg to remain, dear sir,

" Yours respectfully,

" CARTIER."

Ned talked with Pierre Cartier and reported that the jewel merchant simply wanted me to keep the Hope diamond in my custody from Saturday until Monday. I agreed, of course, telling Ned to put the gem on my dresser.

For hours that jewel stared at me. The setting had been changed completely to a frame of diamonds, and there was a splendid chain of diamonds to go about my neck. At some time during that night I began to want the thing.

Do I believe a lot of silly superstitions, legends of the diamond? I must confess I know better and yet, knowing better, I believe. By that I mean I never let my friends or children touch it. Call it a foolish woman's fetish if you like; after you have said so without contradiction, let me say that I have come to feel—not think—that I have developed a sort of immunity to its evil. What tragedies have befallen me might have occurred had I never seen or touched the diamond. I have sense enough to know that fortune-tellers gain fame as prophets by habitually predicting probabilities. My observations have persuaded me that tragedies, for any one who lives, are not escapable.

Pierre Cartier came to call on Monday morning, but the deal hung fire for several months. The price was fixed at \$154,000. I agreed to pay \$40,000 before long and then, in the space of three years \$114,000. I had an emerald and pearl pendant with a diamond necklace that pleased me less, and Cartier accepted that as part of the price. Then I signed a note and Ned signed too. I put the chain around my neck and thereby seemed to hook my life to its destiny of good or evil.

I knew Ned's mother would try to stop me. That was why I hurried to make the purchase irrevocable. When Cartier put our note inside his pocket, I called Mrs. McLean on the telephone.

"Mummie, I have bought the Hope diamond."

With her at the time was Mrs. Robert Goelet, who told me afterwards that my mother-in-law almost fainted.

What I heard her say was, "It is a cursed stone and you must send it back. Worse than its being freighted with bad luck is your buying of it—a piece of recklessness. Money is a trust for better things than jewel buying."

She lectured on and on, and only now and then did I break in to say, "But, Mummie——"

She did not let me say much more, because she had a thousand objections bursting forth.

Finally I said firmly, "But, Mummie, everybody has bad luck. You never know."

She reported then that Mrs. Goelet was joining in her entreaty to save me from a piece of madcap folly. Mrs. Goelet actually spoke to me over the telephone. Then they drove around to see me, continuing to urge a change of mind even while they handled and admired the gem. So, at last, knowing I was obliged to be a nice daughter-in-law, I sent back the stone to Cartier.



And Cartier quite promptly sent it back to me.

Bad luck? Within a narrow space, just about a year or so, both women died: Mrs. Goelet was stricken on her yacht; Mummie died of pneumonia at Bar Harbour. They had to die sometime, as we all do. Nevertheless, lacking other philosophy to meet such events, I made mine up when needed out of odds and ends of superstition and common sense—as do most people, I suppose. In me were half-sprouted faiths in saints concerning whom I had no teachings. Perhaps I simply scared myself for fun; at any rate, I did believe that blue diamond was a talisman of evil.

Every day I received letters from persons near and far who had read that I had become the owner of this stone. A man wrote to me about how he had nearly drowned when the s.s. *Seine* went down. He implied the Hope diamond was aboard, but did not explain who saved it when he asked me to compensate him for some of his later troubles, which he blamed on his former proximity to the thing that was hanging on my neck. I had letter after letter from May Yohe, now trying to recoup some bit of happiness from the ruin of her life. She blamed the diamond; as one woman to another, she begged me to throw it away and break its spell. Every time I got a dozen letters I got fresh thrills, but in spite of myself I began to have about my life some of that feeling with which we await the rising of a curtain at a play.

One day I said to Maggie Buggy, "Can't we get some priest you know to lay the curse?"

"A priest will bless the stone," said Maggie, "and be sure that will foil the devil in it."

We set out in my electric victoria for the church of Monsignor Russell.

"Look, Father," I said to him, "this thing has got me nervous. Would you bless it for me?"

We were in a small side room of the church, and Monsignor Russell donned his robes and put my bauble on a velvet cushion.

As he continued his preparations, a storm broke. Lightning flashed. Thunder shook the church. I don't mind saying various things were scared right out of me. There was no wind or rain; just darkness and these lurid lightning thrusts. Across the street a tree was struck and splintered. Maggie was half frantic with her fear; beads were clicking through her fingers. I wished I could have such faith;

Maggie was calling on personages with whom I rarely reckon in my thoughts.

Monsignor Russell's Latin words gave me strange comfort. Ever since that day, I've worn my diamond as a charm. I kid myself, of course—but I like to pretend the thing brings good luck. As a matter of fact the luckiest thing about it is that, if I ever had to, I could hock it.

Grief over the loss of my father brought me back, temporarily, to morphine.

I was becoming more cunning than an animal in hiding my supply of morphine. A squirrel saving nuts is limited by its undeveloped imagination when it buries such winter treasure in earth holes or hollow trees ; but I was not so handicapped. A squirrel, for example, is debarred from sending money to some greedy doctor or druggist and making arrangements to have a bit of powder sent each day by mail. (That was a trick of mine that worked until Ned had all our mail deliveries switched from 2020 to the *Washington Post*.)

Thin packages were cached beneath my bedroom carpet. With a pair of scissors I would make skilful cuts in obscure places in the furniture and then, as far in as I could poke my thinning arm into the stuffing of chairs, couches, sofas, I would put a small brown bottle, hoping thus to impregnate my future with the drug I craved. I seem to recall that I had one big bottle stored away inside the pipe organ.

I was always popping into drug stores, although on most shopping trips I would simply flick a finger at some servant as a signal to begone upon my errand. In those days a woman, diamond laden, could buy laudanum by the quart if she would simply pay the druggist what he asked. I always went provided with some sort of prescription.

Months went by, and what with dope and drink I had no trace of appetite. I could not keep a thing on my stomach, so I would fill myself with narcotics and go, completely dazed, for two or three hours of driving.

There was one advantage for me in the habit. Ordinarily I worried incessantly about the money—about all the things that formerly my father had dealt with ; but when I took morphine there were no worries, no cares. Of course I paled until I looked like a ghost.

If by some bad chance I could not get the stuff the instant I required it, I would take a dose of chloral, or anything narcotic that I could buy in the drug stores.

Then one day I confessed to Ned.

He was shocked, but sweet. "Can't you stop?" he asked me. "Suppose you try real hard. You know, we've got the baby; we must think of him."

"I'll stop." But I was quite unable to keep my word without help, so one day I called up Dr. Hardin. I told him I had been taking morphine again, that it was beyond my control, and I wanted him to cure me of the habit.

He came, asked some questions, and left beside my bed a big green bottle from which I was supposed to take a small and measured dose whenever I could not control my nerves. Well, during that night I drank everything in the bottle.

It must have been about ten days later that I came to what we may call my senses. When I could focus my eyes, I saw two women sitting in the room; they wore white starched uniforms. Dr. Barker was in charge of my case then.

I also learned that, during those days when I was blithering and dazed, Dr. Barker had wanted me locked up in some sanatorium. That was when Ned McLean did something fine for me.

"We'll have a sanatorium right upstairs," he said, "on the top floor of this house. If she were to come out of this locked up somewhere, she never would recover from the shock. She stays here!"

I was meant to "taper off." At times I felt such pains as must afflict a creature while a bigger beast eats and claws at its middle. God-awful things were hiding underneath my bed, and it was no use telling me they were not there—I knew they were, and felt their dreadful everchanging shapes.

One day I telephoned for Barker.

"I am ready now to fight this thing myself. I will do as you say—that is, I will try, and certainly I will submit myself to any rule you make. Just to prove me, put a vial of morphine tablets on the table here beside my bed. I won't touch them, and I won't drink or smoke a cigarette."

I do not know whether it really was morphine that Dr. Barker left with me, but I believed it was. Wrestling with myself to keep resisting, I would become drenched with perspiration. I did not win the fight for hours.

I know there was a month when during any night I did not pass more than half an hour in bed. We used to walk around that mammoth house throughout the night, the nurses and I. We would circle every gallery as, so many times, I've paced the decks of liners. We would go from the top floor to the

ground, each nurse holding tightly to an arm ; and when we would round a corner or go into another room I would start and tremble.

"What's that crawling on the wall ?"

"Now, now, that's just a shadow, darling."

"If that's a shadow it has legs with substance and a slimy, writhing tail."

Don't ask me to account for it : I really saw the things the nurses said I fancied out of shadows. I have had lots of time to think about the matter. It is my belief that out of mental records of my past the impression of some lizard or garden snake no bigger than a pencil came crawling into memory, and that in my delirium these old impressions were enlarged and projected against the wall and ceilings of my home.

Eventually I seemed to find myself with a lessening craving, but whenever Barker came he warned me : no drinks, no smoking.

I had the help of all who loved me, including Ned. We used to talk of my affliction without a trace of passion. He wanted me to discipline myself for the sake of our baby ; but he was unwilling to discipline himself.

One night, about the time Barker was becoming proud of his cure of me, Ned did not come home. I sent his secretary to the *Post* to get him. When the secretary failed to produce his boss, I called up Ned and ordered him to come right straight to 2020.

"I'm not coming home to-night."

"Unless you come I'm going to pour myself a nice big drink." There were terrific implications there. Need I confess again that I was warped and spoiled ?

"Go on. Take your drink. I'm not coming home."

I was in the fix of a man who draws a gun and lacks the nerve to shoot. I called up Barker over in Baltimore, and told him Ned and I were fighting and that I was about to take a drink. The two nurses, Miss Shearn and Miss O'Brien, were still staying with me, although I was supposed to be quite cured.

"Listen," said Dr. Barker : "don't you dare touch a thing. Get your hat and coat and come straight to me as fast as you can come. I'll be waiting. Mind, now."

I ordered the car and told the two nurses to get ready. Mother had learned of this commotion. She pleaded with me to calm myself and stay at home. I would not listen, flouncing out of the door to where the car was waiting under the glass-roofed *porte-cochère*.

"You open it up," I said to the chauffeur, "and if you fail to pass each car ahead you can be sure some one else will drive for me to-morrow."

I guess I made him mad, or hurt his pride; at any rate, he broke some records for the run from Washington to Baltimore, and lost a fender.

Those two calm nurses were anything but calm when we arrived. The Irish saints they called on for protection were pretty nearly a Catholic education for me.

A suite had been engaged at one of the hotels.

Dr. Barker was waiting in my sitting-room. He is an admirable man—handsome, effective, self-contained, and forceful. I owe him much.

"I'm through," I said to Dr. Barker. "Ned's acting up, terribly. He would not come home to-night and I am through."

Barker raised his eyebrows a little and looked at me.

"Now," went on the dramatist in me, "I'm going to order three cocktails, and cigarettes. I'm pulling wide the throttle on the road to hell."

Barker seated himself in a comfortable chair and merely looked at me.

Presently a hotel servant came and placed the tray of cocktails and the cigarettes on the mantelpiece. The door closed and we two again were alone. I rubbed my hands. Then I walked up to the cocktails—three Manhattans.

I could not reach out for a glass. I told myself that Barker had me hypnotised. Probably the truth is I could not bear to see a man so fine gaze at me with contempt. It was then about half-past nine.

We were there until three-thirty in the morning, and if Barker spoke two words I do not remember them. He simply watched me. Repeatedly I went to the mantelpiece and stopped, just as if I were a clock that had been wound too tightly. Whether Barker really hypnotised me or whether he simply aroused my self-respect I do not know. At some time before dawn the nurses put me to bed, and Barker gave me something he said would make me sleep. It did.

That was the last struggle I had with morphine. I think the credit goes half to Barker, half to little Vinson Walsh McLean.

When I returned home I discovered that Ned was still off somewhere on a drinking spree. My nurses remained with me for some time after that, and even when they left I continued to be careful. My bout with morphine was over for ever.

# THE CHARGE OF THE RHINOCEROS

By

CHERRY KEARTON

*Cherry Kearton, famous for filming wild animals, gives here some of his narrow escapes whilst taking pictures in Africa.*

IN 1909 I travelled from England in a small cargo-boat and reached Mombassa on the morning after a terrific storm. Everything there was very primitive—though none the less interesting to a new comer for that—and instead of landing at a well-built quay beside the Customs House, I was put ashore in a small boat and landed on a shingle beach.

Though I had already been to the Sahara, I had not at that time attempted to photograph anything that could properly be called "jungle life," and though I had read a good many books on Africa I had—as events proved—only a very vague idea of what I should find when I got there. Of course, I pictured myself facing lions and elephants and wondered what I should do when they charged. I expected to find Africa a jungle of tangled trees and vines and undergrowth, through which elephants and rhinos would come crashing mightily; and though I knew that there must be open spaces where buck and gazelles in small herds would wander and browse, I thought they would be like islands in the midst of the jungle. I expected to have frequently to cut my way with a hatchet to reach them and then to set up my camera and wait till something came near enough for me to get my pictures. In a general way I was quite prepared for difficulties, though filled with confidence—born of my previous experiences—that I should be able to overcome them. But of the actual difficulties that did beset me, I had no expectation whatever. Nor was I in the least prepared for the amazing

sights which surrounded me from the day when I first set foot in Africa.

My first shock came at daybreak on the first morning after I boarded the train. I awoke early and waited for daylight. Looking out of the carriage window as day dawned, instead of the expected jungle, I saw an enormous tract of open country dotted with bushes of small trees. As we advanced farther up country, I thought that some of it was very like the English parkland: indeed, I could call to mind several stretches of country which I knew at home that almost exactly resembled it.

But although in that way the view reminded me of home, there was one amazing difference. The animals! Herds of zebra hundreds strong, herds of gazelle, of buck—I was too inexperienced then to distinguish all the different varieties—several groups of giraffe, a rhino, then smaller creatures in the distance which I could see without knowing what they were. The country, as I saw it that morning from the train, simply teemed with animal life.

The next exciting discovery was that these animals were not afraid of the train: they browsed quite close to the line, and as we passed they simply raised their heads and stared. Why, I thought, there's no jungle to cut through, and the animals aren't even as shy as a group of horses in an English field! I shan't even have to stalk them: I can just go and set up my camera in the open, without a hide, and take all the photographs I want! Marvellous! What a paradise for a photographer!

And then, as the day wore on, we crossed the great Athi Plains, which are seventy miles across and covered with grass with hardly a single bush or tree. There, the animals were even more numerous. Herds of zebra must have been at least a thousand strong, their stripes standing out against the dull greenish brown of the landscape and thrilling me with their possibilities for picture-making. Wildebeest, in herds nearly as big, kongoni, gazelles, and ostriches frequently strung out in a line added to the picturesqueness of the scene. Animals in their thousands—no, tens of thousands! And the train puffing among them, and yet leaving them undisturbed!

And yet when I got down to work, all that paradise seemed to fade like a mirage. Herds that would only stand and stare at a train would bound away in terror when I, alone, walked within two hundred yards of them. Mile after weary

mile I tramped, yard after aching yard I crawled ; I used all the skill I had in stalking, in taking cover ; I built hides which in England would have crowned my efforts with success ; and yet for day after day I failed to get the pictures I wanted.

I was well aware that though my hunter friends could kill at two hundred yards, I with my camera had to get within fifty yards in order to get any result that would be recognisable on the screen. And that seemed impossible. Moreover, there were worse drawbacks to trying than the disheartening sense of failure : there were seeds in the grass which got into my boots and then worked into my flesh, creating sores, and there were literally thousands of ticks—I had to scrape them off my legs with my hunting-knife. I would come back to camp in the evening, too weary and too sore even to realise my disappointment. It was not Paradise that I thought of then !

Nor did I at first find much joy in the experience of camping in Africa. To set up one's camp in the wilds and sleep there alone with Nature—it is a thing that every boy has dreamed of. I, too had, looked forward to it. City life, which I have never liked, would be forgotten : I would lie under the stars and listen to birds, and fall asleep at last to awake at dawn and look out on jungle scenes among which I could take the most marvellous pictures. But it wasn't like that. I didn't lie and listen to birds : I sought desperately for sleep hour after hour in the night amid a hundred uncomfortable noises—the ghastly laugh of the hyena, the cry of the jackal, the puffing of a rhinoceros. And when at last sleep came, I would be roused almost at once—roused with a quaking start by the roar of a lion. Safely in England, I had thought it would be a grand thing to hear a lion roaring in his native jungle. But the first time I heard it, the repeated and ever-growing roar of satisfaction, swelling up and up and then slowly dying away, I did not think it grand, but only terrible. I don't know how near it was—if I had guessed then, I should probably have been wrong—but it seemed alarmingly close, and my mind was filled with a picture of a lion suddenly breaking into my camp, putting the native boys to flight, and then seizing me as I hurried out of my tent. It was no pleasant thought with which to be aroused from dreams.

As usually happens, it was time that brought the cure. Even to-day, after twenty-five years, the roaring of lions is bloodcurdling and awesome to me, especially since several of my old chums have been killed by them. But I know now,



fairly accurately, how far the sound has travelled before it reaches me—and usually it is a good distance. I know too, what I did not appreciate then, that only in the rarest cases will a lion attack a camp where there is a blazing fire. In fact, I can measure the danger—and consequently I can laugh at it.

That knowledge came slowly, and with it came a great deal of other knowledge about my job as an animal photographer. I learnt that stalking in Africa was quite different from stalking in England, because one animal would warn another. At first I imagined that I could disregard a buck feeding up wind when I wanted to stalk another that was feeding down wind ; but I very soon found that the one I ignored would give a warning to the one from which I was hidden. I also found that I couldn't trust my eyes. Again and again I would try to stalk giraffe—a difficult operation at the best when one is carrying a heavy cinematograph camera—and I would get behind a bush with the satisfactory feeling that I was so far undetected : then I would notice a slight movement in a thorn-tree and discover that a part of that thorn tree was *really a giraffe which harmonised so closely with it that I had never detected him*—and yet he was watching me over the top of the tree so that he warned the others before I could get the camera into action.

So eventually I decided that my experience in the British Isles counted for very little in these new conditions. My old methods could not even be adapted. I considered using the ingenious kind of hides my brother and I had employed in England, but altering them to suit the locality ; thus, instead of using a dummy sheep, I thought I might have a dummy zebra. But my hunting friends quickly pointed out how easy it would be for them to shoot that zebra—and me inside it ; and they asked what, for another thing, I proposed to do if the " zebra " was stalked by a lion.

I therefore decided to content myself with simpler hides made with hollowed-out bushes with a thin lining of grass and leaves matted in front. These I planned to build beside the animals' tracks and water-holes.

But I soon found that even that was not as simple as it looked. One day I got a companion to build a screen of this sort around me, and then he went away while I remained with the idea of photographing a herd of eland as they grazed past me. When the eland came in sight, they stopped about a hundred yards away (too far for my purpose), and prepared to settle down for the heat of the day.

While I was wondering what to do, I happened to glance up. And there, only a few feet from my head, I saw a huge python. It was lying in the thorn-bush which formed part of my shelter, and was gazing at me with what I suppose was astonishment, turning its head this way and that to get a better view.

I didn't wait an instant. I had a rifle beside me and, seizing it, I put a bullet clean through the python's head.

But snakes are not killed easily. This one lashed out even after it was dead—I suppose it is a sort of reflex action—and as I leapt out of my shelter it very nearly struck me. Then my companion and some natives came running up, having heard the shot. We chopped away some of the branches with the idea of uncoiling the python from the tree, and eventually succeeded in loosening some eight feet of it—and then suddenly the great dead snake contracted itself and twisted round my companion, pinning him against the tree!

That incident gave me a dislike of hides in Africa. Later I discovered other difficulties. One of them was that when you are shut in a hide with only a small peep-hole through which to peer at the outside world, you lose all sense of proportion. You cannot compare the sizes of things, and if all you can see is a leaf with a fly on it, before many minutes have passed you will find it impossible to realise that that fly is not almost as big as an elephant. This creates a sense of unreality which is soon followed by a loss of balance. If your hide is quite securely fixed on the ground, well and good; but if it shows any tendency to wobble, your efforts to steady yourself will almost invariably make matters worse.

I had discovered this in England, but I was very forcibly reminded of it very soon after I started work in Africa, when I left the plains and went to photograph waterfowl on Lake Naivasha. I got a small boat and covered the bows of it with canvas and the middle with reeds, leaving only small peep-holes for my eyes and the lens of my camera. I paddled the boat until its nose rested in a small isolated clump of reeds, and then I crawled forward with my camera under the canvas covering. I got everything into position and crouched as comfortably as I could, expecting a long wait. Through the peep-hole I could see a few stems of reeds and a small stretch of water between them. At this I stared, losing all sense of proportion while the reeds seemed to become as large as great trees. Then I shifted my position and of course in doing so I rocked the boat. In the ordinary way I could have steadied it

easily ; but under the covering I pressed the wrong way at each movement of the boat—and suddenly the whole thing turned turtle.

How I escaped being drowned I do not know ; but somehow or other I managed by good luck to get out of my " hide " and into the open water ; and then I swam ashore, not appreciably worse for the adventure but quite convinced that a closed-in boat was not the proper place from which to photograph birds.

I then had a giant chair built—rather like a baby's chair, but with very long legs. I laid this on a platform built across two boats, and then I had it lowered into the water some fifty yards from the shore. I fixed reeds carefully round it, and after I had taken my seat—with my feet just touching the water—my native boys fastened more reeds all round me until I was completely hidden in an artificial clump that appeared to rise out of the lake. Knowing that I had to be hidden from birds in the air as well as from those on the water, I had the erection covered at the top as well as at the sides, so that I was closely boxed in.

Then my boys left me, with instructions not to come back till four hours later.

Very soon the birds made their appearance—Egyptian geese, lily trotters, ibis, herons, storks, moorhens, and bittern. It was a marvellous sight. Some were suspicious, but others settled calmly on reeds close in front of my camera and for a long time I was much too busy to think about my curious position . . . which was perhaps as well, for it certainly had its dangers. There were hippo in that part of the lake, and, of course, if a hippo had collided—either intentionally or otherwise—with the chair, I should have been upset. And in the midst of that box of reeds, with growing reeds and weeds all round me, I should have had little chance of swimming.

My success with this form of hide-up, led me to devise others. And as my knowledge of African conditions increased, success came with it. On an island in the lake I secured excellent pictures of cormorants and the sacred ibis, and then, with mounting confidence, I went in search of hippo.

In those first efforts after this monster creature I was not particularly successful, but I did a great deal better when I left the lake and went to the Tana River. Yet even that success was not of the kind which would thrill the majority of lovers of sport. For the first nine days I did not get a single opportunity of taking a photograph. I used to walk cautiously

down to the river bank, becoming aware as I approached it that there were large numbers of hippo basking on the rocks in the middle of a big pool. But, however cautious I was, I was always discovered, and then there would be nothing to be seen except a few moving pairs of nostrils and now and again some smooth dark skin like a tiny island, which would rise above the surface and quickly disappear.

I would get into my hide and sit there, all eager for my pictures, despite the active attention of mosquitoes and flies and ants—despite also the fact that a number of buffalo lived in some dense bush near to the river and occasionally appeared to be unpleasantly close to me. All that time there was the faintest of breezes—so slight that for some days I was unaware of it—blowing my scent straight to the hippo, and it was only on the tenth day, when the wind changed, that I achieved success. But what a success I had then! The hippo no longer paid any attention to me. Not one of them had any idea that I was there and as, on that tenth morning, I crept down to the bank, I was amazed to see about fourteen of the creatures playing in the water, basking in the sunlight, and occasionally diving but always reappearing, within easy range of my camera.

I knew that up to that time no one else had ever succeeded in taking such cinematograph pictures. There were hippo and crocodiles basking together in a sort of mixed family group. There were water-tortoises nestling close to the crocodiles' jaws. There were birds waiting to pick parasites out of the crocodiles' teeth. I felt then that for all the trouble I had had during my first three months in Africa, I was amply repaid.

My first exciting adventure in Africa—apart from such minor matters as nearly being drowned in the lake—had come a few weeks earlier. After some months I had joined forces with an American naturalist, Mr. James L. Clark, who with his guns was out to secure specimens for the New York Natural History Museum. We were in the heart of the lion country—one troop of fifteen lions was said to be roaming quite close to us—and consequently I was carrying a rifle. Clark also had his rifle, and we had with us two of the Masai, armed with spears, and a boy to carry my camera.

The boy with the camera was leading—at least, he was leading at one minute, and the next, the point at which this story really begins, he was away behind us, running for all he

was worth. The Masai started running, too; and so did Clark and I. We weren't sure what we were running from, but we were in an open stretch of country with no possible protection from danger except a single tree forty yards away, and we all ran towards that. Then, as we stopped, panting, and turned, the danger was apparent: two great rhinos were charging straight at us.

The Masai stood ready with their spears—and I must say here that those two men were a credit to their brave race: they stood their ground and when the affair was over we found that their spears were actually twisted with the weight of the impact as the animals charged home. Meanwhile, Clark and I stopped and knelt. I waited for Clark to fire as he had a big-game licence and I had not. By that time the rhinos were within a dozen yards of us. Clark's rifle jammed, or misfired, and he cried out to me. I fired at one of the creatures which was coming straight at me: I had a momentary vision of the great horn apparently right on top of me as I knelt, and then the animal collapsed within inches of my knee.

I scrambled to my feet and looked for the other rhino. A cloud of dust covered everything and I did not know what had happened. Suddenly I ran round to the other side of the tree: I have no idea what prompted me to do so, but I did it, and quickly found the second rhino. Or, perhaps it would be more exact to say that he found me. At any rate, we met—shoulder against shoulder, with great violence. And as a rhino's weight, on the average, is about three tons, it may be guessed that it was I that was knocked over.

Of course, I was fortunate. If I had been a few inches to one side, I should have been struck by the rhino's horn and undoubtedly killed: whereas I escaped with only a few bruises. And the surprise of our impact so startled the great creature that he immediately turned and galloped away as fast as he could, leaving us beside the dead body of his mate.

The other great adventure of this trip was my first meeting, in the open bush, with lions. I had always looked forward to that, and we had tramped miles, following reports of the animals' presence, only to find, again and again, that the news had been false, or else that the animals had moved off from where they had been seen. When the roaring of lions disturbed our slumbers, we would be up early in search of them. When we heard of the troop of fifteen which I have referred to above, we followed them all day without success. Then some Masai

told us of seven others, and we actually found their spoor which looked so fresh that I did not think they could have been more than a quarter of a mile away ; yet we could not find them.

Then, when Clark and I were out with Mr. Harold Hill, a settler, we came to a low kopje covered with rocks and low bush, where it was said that several lions were in residence.

It was a little round hill, perhaps three hundred feet high and a half-mile across. On one side of it was ordinary bush country consisting of short, half-dried grass and occasional low thorn-bushes, either in clumps of three or four, or else singly ; on the other were the open Athi plains. All the "cover" was on the hill—that is to say, in the lions' territory—and we had to camp at some distance and make daily journeys to the foot of the hill. When we arrived, early in the morning, we started to stalk the lions which we faithfully imagined to be lying hidden among the boulders. I carried my camera, weighing nearly seventy pounds, on my shoulders, and the business of creeping forward with every precaution against noise, now clambering over high boulders, now stealing forward to examine a patch of longish grass, now stopping to search a likely spot where two rocks inclined to make a cave—well, it was no light work under the tropical sun of Africa. In addition to that, there was the constant excitement of knowing that at any moment we might see a tawny glint of skin—it might be merely crouching, or even sleeping, but equally it might be stalking us while we stalked it.

In the course of a week, we covered every foot of the hill and were convinced that we had looked behind every single rock. And yet there was no sight of a lion. I don't suppose we should have stuck it so long but for Hill who, as the "local authority," was regarded as a reliable witness when he insisted that he himself had seen three lions on this kopje only a short time before. In any case we were all relieved when, on the eighth morning, some one suggested that we should give ourselves a holiday from the kopje and go and search a neighbouring patch of bush. The idea was that we should collect a number of natives and get them to "beat" through the bush so that if any lions were there they would be driven out past my camera.

I think the "beaters" enjoyed the day. They furnished themselves with drums and old tin cans and made a glorious noise as they advanced in a long line into the bush. But it wasn't so much fun for the rest of us. Clark superintended the work of the natives ; Hill sat on his horse, ready to decoy

any lion that came out so that it should gallop past the camera ; and I crouched behind a large ant-hill (protected by a single Masai spearman) and waited for whatever might come. Of course, whilst waiting at the beginning of the drive, I was busy with the reflection that the lion (or lions) might not carry out the programme quite as we had arranged it—or they might think me preferable to the horse. But as the morning wore on, I lost these thoughts in an access of sheer boredom. For nothing happened whatsoever. There were no lions after all in that patch of bush, and Hill sat idly on his horse while I crouched equally idly behind my ant-hill, under the blazing sun, waiting and waiting for what didn't happen.

The next day we returned to the kopje. I must confess that by that time I no longer viewed that little hill with much affection or any great hopefulness, and when the usual weary search began—Hill coming with me on to the slope, while Clark with Hill's nephew examined the ground at the base of the hill—I looked more at the open plain below and some clumps of bush than at the kopje itself. But suddenly the "boy" beside me attracted my attention, and I turned to see him pointing to a spot at the very base of the hill. And there, only a hundred yards away, stood a lioness and two full-grown cubs.

To me, it was an amazing sight. It was for this, more than for anything else, that I had come to Africa. Till that moment I had never seen these glorious creatures outside the cages of a zoo ; and here they were, "as large as life and twice as natural," in the open country, their own country, with nothing but a slope of bare, rocky ground between me and them. The wind blew in my face, so that it did not carry my scent to the lions. And they had not yet seen me, so that they were entirely unaware of the presence of man, showing no fear or suspicion, and merely standing quietly in the shade of a tree.

In that instant I trained my camera on them, forgetful of everything but the thrill of the moment and my anxiety to secure my pictures. If only the animals would come a little closer !

My sudden movement drew Hill's attention also—and at that moment we realised that Clark and Hill's nephew had as yet no suspicion of the lions' presence, although they were only twenty yards from them, on the farther side of a thicket of bush. If the lions came round that thicket before we warned our friends, tragedy might follow, for two men have but little chance against three lions when they are surprised

at such a short distance. So Hill shouted : " Lions—Shout ! " his idea being that if they were to shout suddenly and loudly the lions would bolt in the opposite direction, and that that would bring them nicely into the range of my camera. But unfortunately Hill's voice, coming against the wind, did not come clearly, and Clark only heard a word which he thought was " Shoot ! " Seeing nothing and not knowing what he was meant to fire at, nor what was the danger, he drew his revolver and fired a couple of shots into the ground : I suppose he thought that the sound of firing would scare whatever was supposed to be in hiding.

But lions do not always react to the sound of shots as they do to shouting. The human voice can scare them, but thanks to past efforts of the lion-hunters, they generally regard shots as an immediate challenge, a sign of danger, an invitation to defend themselves by charging.

At the sound of the revolver-shots, therefore, the lioness and the two lions turned suddenly and with every appearance of stealth, but yet with great rapidity, began to steal round the edge of the thicket towards the place where our two friends were standing ; while they, still unaware of what all our excitement was about, stood looking around on every side, trying to make out what was the danger and from which direction it was likely to come. Then we saw Clark sign to Hill's nephew to follow him, and begin to move cautiously forward along the edge of the thicket. And we knew that in another minute he and the leading lion would come abruptly face to face—with nothing between them but about ten yards of open ground.

Ten yards is no protection from a lion. Clark might have had time to throw his rifle forward as a protection to his chest as the lion sprang, but his chances of killing it would have been practically nil ; and even then there would have been the two others to be dealt with an instant later. While if he had tried to run, the nearest lion would undoubtedly have overtaken him within a few seconds.

But, of course, I did not think of these things then. Instead, I acted on the instinct which suspends thought when a friend is in danger, and I yelled : " Lions—Shout ! Shout ! "

Perhaps my lung-power was stronger than Hill's. In any case, this time the words were heard and understood, so that both men began shouting as loudly as they could ; and then, after creeping cautiously backwards, with rifles at the ready, till another corner of the thicket was between them and the



lions, they both raced at top speed to the shelter of a giant ant-hill, some ten feet high, which stood at a little distance.

*That shouting disturbed the lions. It came down wind to them, a confused medley of sound and something quite strange in the African bush, so that they were puzzled and for a second they stood hesitating. Then they turned and made their way cautiously between short bushes to a group of rocks on the hill. And as they went, they passed within thirty yards of my camera, so that triumph came to me after nine days of disappointment, and I secured the first moving pictures ever taken of lions in their native haunts.*

# AN AFGHAN RAID

By

ACHMED ABDULLAH

*Achmed Abdullah is himself an Afghan on his mother's side, but here he tells one of his adventures while working against his own people for the British-Indian Military Intelligence Service on the North-West frontier of India.*

I DID not spend much time at Peshawar headquarters nor at Fort Jamrud which straddles the entrance of the Khybar. For I was mostly back-stage, beyond the Pass, in other words, in "No-Man's-Land." No man's for the good and sufficient reason that neither the British nor the Afghans care for jurisdiction over the border tribesmen; their reputation being such that—according to what an old chief of theirs told me with considerable pride—Satan himself never goes there, for fear that somebody might steal his horns and red-hot pitchfork.

The main reason why I was sent on Intelligence work up there was that the Indian Government, for strategic purposes, had decided on extensive railway development and road building in that neighbourhood.

The tribesmen—Waziris and Afridis and various miscellaneous ruffians—did not like the idea of a road. For it meant British patrols clattering up and down. It meant an end to the old days, the free, lusty, rowdy days when a brisk man might help himself to the goods and likely women of Hindu traders rash or greedy enough to risk the perils of the mountains. It meant the King-Emperor's law running its sharp, pitiless way—and not, as heretofore, the law running the other way, running like a startled rabbit, with the laughing, yelling tribesmen at its heels.

So the latter offered resistance to our survey parties and armed forces. Discovering that, due to our larger numbers

and superior equipment and discipline, they could not stand up against us in pitched battle, they had recourse to guerrilla warfare—potting our soldiers, preferably our officers, from ambush; turning over the corpses to their women for rather unpleasant mutilation; sneaking at night through the sentry lines and stealing army rifles and cutting an occasional army throat; and, in various other ways, making life uncomfortable for Tommy Atkins.

We tried to parley. We offered them work; offered them financial subsidies. But an Afghan would sooner make five dollars by robbery and other strong-thewed, lawless, violent methods than fifty by legitimate toil.

The reason!

I have an idea he likes the exciting, dramatic uncertainty of the former way.

He sits there in his round stone tower house on top of a granite hill. The exchequer is low. His wife is giving him a curtain lecture because . . . "*wah*, O creature!"—the wife of Murad Hydar Khan, on the neighbouring hill, has a brand-new and most gorgeous nose-stud . . . "while I have not even the smell of a single silver anklet, O brother of a naughty sister!"

The man of the house tries to assert himself.

"Be quiet," he commands, "and prepare supper!"

"I will not be quiet, O son of a hyena and an unclean she-devil," shrieks his wife, "nor shall I prepare supper! How can I? There is no saffron in the kitchen, no garlic, no honey, no flour—with you so lazy, O pimple on the belly of a cockroach!"

The man of the house sighs deeply. Vexed, he reflects, the Prophet Mohammed—peace on Him!—was right when he said that Allah created no calamity more hurtful to man than woman.

But the next moment, propitiously, a *kafila*, a caravan, lumbers into sight in the valley below. At once the sun of prosperity begins to shine through the fog of marital nagging and unhappiness.

He exclaims:

"Praised be the Lord God the Merciful!"

He shoots off his rifle to call his clansmen to arms. They gather. The village priest blesses their enterprise . . . for, these Hindu merchants, are they not of the unbelievers who worship false gods—and are they not black men? Must they not, therefore, "eat steel and stick"?

Decidedly !

So the tribesmen rush down into the valley. And then—out-and-out robbery ? Not exactly, according to their own interpretation and given the ferocious Afghan sense of humour.

For listen to the *aksakal*, the village "grey-beard" or chief, addressing the leader of the caravan :

"These mountains are dangerous. There are bad men hereabouts—bandits bloody and unashamed. But—do not worry ! I shall protect you against them—I swear it—by the honour of my nose ! The cost ? Trifling. Only the horse you ride—and three camel-loads of cotton goods !"

The Hindu wails. He appeals to half a dozen assorted deities, while the *aksakal* continues :

"There is also a tax to be paid for crossing my territory. How much ? Again—trifling, because I love you. Four camel-loads of goods and—oh, yes—the ruby ring on your thumb. For it will look mighty well on the thumb of my maternal uncle's nephew, meaning myself !"

He slips on the jewel. He adds :

"Thank you, O most generous beard ! Whoever says that Hindus are misers lies in his throat ! And so—as a further proof of your munificence—what say you to a small loan since I am poor ? Five hundred rupees I need. Eh ? You haven't the money ? Then I shall take the rest of your belongings as security. And—once more—thank you, thank you ! White is your heart, O black man !"

A pause. He says :

"There is also the young girl over there. Your daughter ? Ah—blessed be her father ! For she has the eyes of a gazelle and the waist of a she-lion and dark locks like cobras ! I shall permit her to enter my house—a Moslem's house, O infidel—thereby greatly honouring you and her ! And now begone—before I lose my patience, O eater of dirt !"

Oh, yes—an amusing and profitable existence.

And here now came the British—bless them not the Lord Allah !—with their confounded roads, their confounded red-coats, their confounded law and order ; and so, I repeat, there was potting from ambush, the border bathed in blood, and a number of Intelligence Service people, including myself, sent up to snoop about.

Of course I travelled in disguise. I was dressed as a cattle drover—the Central Asian equivalent of the ubiquitous Ameri-

can drummer—correct in every last detail from small, tight turban to rough sheepskin coat and loose trousers of yellow leather, from the rawhide whip curled round my left wrist to the three daggers protruding from my embroidered Bokharan waist-shawl.

To prove my virility, I let my beard grow to a fine, thick, reddish length. I ate—once more to prove my virility—twice as much stewed, stringy, greasy mutton as my stomach could hold. I belched extravagantly—not to prove my virility, but my good manners—after each indigestible meal, in token that I had enjoyed it. I cursed all unbelievers, principally the British, root and branch at the slightest provocation. I was strict in the reciting of the five daily Moslem prayers and the counting of my ninety-nine amber rosary beads—mentioning for each bead one of the ninety-nine names or attributes of Allah; the hundred not being complete, since the perfection of the Creator is unlimited.

Also—and I hasten to explain that I did these things in my temporary character as a cattle drover who is the proverbial “fast man” among the hill-folk—I boasted loudly and indiscreetly of my physical prowess in passion and of favours enjoyed in the harem, another man’s harem. And I told the sort of lewd stories in which the Afghans delight and which would have brought the blush of shame to the cheeks of the Duke of Buckingham or Lord Rochester or Sir Charles Sedley or any other hard-boiled rake of the Restoration.

Finally—as I was out to collect information, to spy, and as news sifts more quickly through the women’s quarters than through mosque and bazaar—I made friends with the ladies and did a great deal of indiscriminate love-making: the love-making of the border which is frank, direct, and, I fear, a little indelicate to European taste and prejudice.

Eventually I arrived in an Afridi village called the *Mahatta Ghurah*, or the “Raven’s Station.”

This border stronghold deserved its name since, contrary to the principles of gravitation and equilibrium, it was clinging against steep boulders in a rugged, bleak chaos of hills where scrub oak met pine and where pine—to quote an Afridi saying—met the naked heart of Allah.

Above it towered a granite range, hooded and grim like the gigantic eyebrow of some heathen god. In a little cuplike valley to the west the tribesmen’s goats and small, russet cattle grazed on lean pasture-land. Farther to the west stretched another long valley, smooth and polished with a faint snow haze

and, slashing through, straight as a blade, the caravan road which leads to Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan; the caravan road which, many centuries ago, had echoed the martial footsteps of Alexander's legions, marching to the conquest of Hindustan; the caravan road which—once more to quote an Afridi saying—is as old as strife and older than peace, as old as tears and older than laughter, as old as hate and older than love.

I had left my cattle in the valley under the care of a Kashmiri—his name was something like Ajit Madam—whom I had picked up and employed as a herder. I had gone up to the Raven's Station for a special task: to find out the name and precise whereabouts of an Afridi ruffian who, though he belonged to the community, was making his home just then, at least most of the time, behind a rock somewhere in the broken wilderness on the slope—while, down below, an encampment of the British vanguard offered an excellent view and first-rate target practice.

This Afridi was even more objectionable than the rest of the clansmen.

Not only during the past fortnight—and we would not have minded that so much, it being his patriotic duty—had he taken his full share of British lives, having sniped three officers and, among them, a good friend of mine, Captain C. W. Foster of the 38th (King George's Own) Central Indian Horse. But he had cut off Foster's head and some unmentionable parts of his anatomy. Then, on a pitch-black night, he had sneaked up to the encampment and had tossed the bloody package inside, as a memento of his good-will and loving-kindness.

Altogether the man was an unmitigated nuisance. An example had to be made.

One of our fire-eating young subalterns suggested sending a punitive expedition to the Raven's Station and razing it to the ground. But, very wisely, the O.C., an ancient and gouty war horse, decided against it.

For—he explained—serious trouble awaits any column operating in the high ranges. It depends upon awkward, lumbering transport and commissary, since it needs more food and water than the district usually affords. It has to cart along a brace of mountain batteries. And, more especially while retiring after having chastised the village, any slight tactical error will be turned to prompt advantage by the tribesmen who will follow up the rearguard closely in spite of scouting parties and similar precautions, and who, with their

hawk-eyed sentinels secure on the precipitous crags above, will profit immediately by all hitches and missteps.

Furthermore—suppose the hamlet is wiped out—what good will that do ?

The bulk of the inhabitants, with the exception of the snipers sitting pretty among the boulders, would have moved, lock, stock, and barrel, including the goats and cattle, long before we could have got under way. They would have taken refuge in the farther, inaccessible wilderness. Then, after our cursing, footsore troopers had returned to their base, they would pop out of hiding, rebuild their houses—mighty little trouble about that, with plenty of stones and mud about—and thumb their noses at us derisively.

An appeal to be a bit more sportsmanlike in their methods of warfare was also out of the question. Indeed the Afridis have no finer instincts. Their gamut of motivation and emotion runs a simple and crude octave, with fanatical Moslem faith at one end, avarice at the other, and unspeakable cruelty in the middle.

The only thing to do was to catch this particular assassin. To kill him—of course. But more than kill him, his breed not being afraid of death.

Our idea was more elaborate.

We meant, first of all, to cover his naked body from head to toe with a thick coating of lard. Then we proposed to hang him by the neck and, finally, to bury him in the same grave with a pig—thereby, the pig being the unclean animal *par excellence* according to the Koran, ruining his chance of Paradise and Salvation for all eternity to come, thus discouraging the other clansmen from following in his gory footsteps.

All we had to do was to get hold of the lad. And that's why—I repeat—I went up to the Raven's Station.

I figured that the one most likely to be in his confidence was the local Moslem priest, a man—shall I ever forget his name, his beak of a nose, his beady grey eyes, his black whiskers, or his nasty disposition ?—called Hajji Musa Rashid. And the one most likely to be in the latter's confidence was his wife . . . a very pretty young woman as I discovered when I saw her on the threshold of her house that was separated by a small herb garden from the simple, whitewashed village mosque.

This was on a Friday—which made my task easier since it is the Islamic Sabbath and all the male True Believers, except I, were inside, echoing the priest's nasal chant, in Arabic, learned by heart and unintelligible to them :

"*Urhum yah rubb ! Khalkat, elathi ent khalakta ; urhum el-mezakin, wah el-juaanin, wah el-ayranin ! Urhum—y'ellah—* have mercy, O Lord God, upon Thy creatures which Thou didst create ! Pity the sighing of the poor, the hungry, and the naked ! Have mercy, have mercy upon them, O Lord ! "

A most hypocritical prayer, when you consider that the Afridis know less about mercy than an anthropoid ape . . . and I as hypocritical as the rest since I bowed my head, mumbled unctuously and made believe that I was going to join the congregation.

Then—I had watched her for quite a while—I seemed to see the woman.

I stopped. I looked at her. She looked back.

I essayed a wink. She smiled.

I lit a cigarette—a foreign and thus heathenish thing to do, like asking for a cocktail at Bishop Cannon's dinner-table or crossing yourself in an Alabama Baptist stronghold. Still—I was supposed to be a cattle drover, therefore a red-hot sport.

Again I winked at her. Again she smiled. Her eyes *were* lovely ; and so I proceeded directly towards my—well—military objective.

I suggested :

" Let us go for a walk, O heart of three roses ! "

She whispered coquettishly :

" Why, O son of Adam ? "

I gave an extra tilt to my turban. I chose words that were winged and lyrical. I was proud of them at the time ; am still proud in my recollection.

" Because," I replied, " your locks are storm-dark as the parting of friends, and your face sunny as the noon when friends meet again. And as to your eyes—by my own and my mother's honour!—the moon shines in them . . . though, possibly, it is your eyes which shine in the moon's glory ! Ah"—and I revelled in the florid and curiously stilted Afghan peasant parlance which is so reminiscent of the Gaelic—" come with me, O child of kings ! "

She gave a little laugh.

" You talk like a poet," she told me.

" Can you blame me ? Ah—who would *not* talk like a poet, with you so near ? "

Rather a neat bit of repartee, if I say it myself

Besides, it seemed to do the trick. For she did not resist when I put an arm about her waist ; and—since, in spite of Islam's stifling, rigid sex laws, these Afridi women are quite



as lawless as their lords and masters, bred to brazen freedom, sloughing their will and their passion as snakes cast their skin—everything would surely have been all right if not just then . . .

It was my fault. You see, like any ham actor, I was carried away by my own words, impressed by my own eloquence. And it nearly proved my undoing.

If dimly, in a back cell of my brain, I realised that the chanting in the mosque had ended and service was over, I paid no attention to it. I went on whispering sweet nothings. Then—the first thing I knew—there were the True Believers pouring out of the building and, among them, Hajji Musa Rashid, priest and husband.

He saw me hugging his wife. He rushed at me ; drew a dagger ; exclaimed in most unpriestly accents :

“Defend yourself, O father of pigs. . . .”

I was in an awkward predicament.

Had I been a bona fide cattle drover I would have answered in kind. I would have unsheathed my weapon ; and there would have been a fine brawl on that fine day, two lusty men at each other with thrust and slash.

Death it would have been—for him or for me ; and if for him, it would have meant blood-feud : an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life. In keeping with the Afridi custom, his relatives would have granted me two hours to get away ; would then have nosed down my trail like jackals to the reek of carrion. This, even though I succeeded in making my escape, would have closed that part of the border for me and would have put a stop to my local usefulness in the Intelligence Service.

On the other hand, I could not afford to side-step the quarrel. It would have branded me as a coward ; I would have been the butt of everybody's ridicule and contempt ; and this, too, would have ended my usefulness.

Rapidly these reflections flashed through my head. As rapidly I found—and used—an alternative.

I feigned drunkenness.

Drunkenness is, of course, a grave misdemeanour according to the faith of Islam since it is written in the Koran :

“O True Believers, verily wine is an abomination of the work of Satan who seeketh to sow dissension and unhappiness among you by means of it ; therefore I command you to avoid it, that ye may prosper and be blessed in the Lord . . . ”

Still, it is with Islam as it is with Christendom. Not all Christians turn the right cheek when you smite them on the left ;

nor—indeed I have heard of good Baptist clergymen belching foul hymns of hate at the mere mention of Al Smith's name—are they overcome with love for their neighbours. Similarly, not all Moslems are rank prohibitionists.

In fact, the tribesmen winked tolerantly and were vastly amused when I hiccoughed loudly and shamelessly, gave the young woman a hard squeeze, then stumbled up to her husband and stammered :

“ Love your wife—*hic*—love you—*hic*—love—by Allah !—*hic*—whole family. . . .”

It tied his hands effectually since, in the Orient, drunken people, like half-wits, are not held responsible for their deeds or misdeeds. Nor did his wife give me away. She was a game little sport.

She laughed as boisterously as the rest. Hajji Musa Rashid did likewise.

Not only that.

For he proceeded to play the good Samaritan—or so, at least, I thought. He suggested I had better go back to where I lived, in the valley; and sleep off the effects of my inebriation.

How kindly and considerate he was !

“ Where is your horse, O Moslem ? ” he inquired.

I told him, with another tremendous hiccough. It was a short distance down the slope where there was good grazing land.

“ Come on,” said the priest, taking me carefully by the arm.

He asked me if he should saddle his mare and ride along. I thanked him, assuring him that I would be all right alone once I was mounted, since my grey Kabuli gelding knew the way and was as sure-footed as a mule.

We started off, he leading me. When we reached the place where I had left my horse we were out of sight of the village shielded by a granite bluff. Nobody was about, though presently I heard a stirring of leaves, a snapping of dry stalks, a herder's ringing, high-pitched call of : “ Woo-oh ! Woo-ah ! Come-oh ! Cattle-oh ! Cattle-ah ! ” and from round a rhododendron thicket came a number of shaggy, ruddy cows, and driving them with a pointed stick, a young girl, perhaps twelve years of age.

She passed on her way while Hajji Musa Rashid continued being a good Samaritan. I was still playing my drunken rôle, making silly remarks, stumbling, almost falling once or twice. He unhobbled my gelding ; tightened the girth ; made as if to hoist me up to the saddle.

For a moment I had my back to him. And then, suddenly, the good Samaritan changed to the treacherous knavish Afridi. For—and it was perhaps my own Afghan instinct, treacherous too, therefore suspicious of another man's motives, which, at the very last fraction of a second, caused me to fling myself sideways and down to the ground—I felt steel, meant for a spot between my shoulder-blades, slash deeply into my left thigh.

I jumped to my feet. I faced him.

Right then and there I forgot all about blood-feud and about my duty to the Intelligence Service and, generally, the British Empire. My "Irish"—or, which is very much the same thing, my "Afghan"—was up. I was going to have that ruffian's life. So I drew my own weapon, a broad and heavy *cheray* built on the lines of a butcher's cleaver.

But I was not quick enough. The saintly Moslem divine's leg shot out and up and kicked the *cheray* from my grasp.

He announced, triumphantly and unsympathetically:

"Now is the time to order your shroud, O lecherous one!"

He lunged forward with a flash of dagger—and then something happened. No more than a stone which came whizzing through the air, struck him on the temple and knocked him cold. . . .

It was the little herder who had saved my life.

She must have glanced over her shoulder to see what was going on. And—the first and, doubtless, the last of her race not to enjoy bloodshed—she had come to my rescue. Afridi boys and girls having frequently to defend their flocks against marauding wolves and being able to throw rocks with a shattering force and accuracy that would command Babe Ruth's respectful admiration.

The very next moment, when she realised that she had knocked out so great a dignitary as the village priest, she ran away as fast as her thin brown legs would let her. Nor did I stop to gather daisies. I mounted and was off.

I still have a vivid recollection of that ride. It was not very pleasant.

My gelding was a bit of a "slug" and as opinionated as a Lowland Scot. He noticed soon enough that my left leg, which was beginning to bleed badly, was of no earthly use to me. He took advantage of it, after the manner of horses, and—having rather hazy notions as to distance and safety—he negotiated each sharp curve on that steep and narrow trail to the valley with a reckless abandon that gave me brief but absorbing views



*"He lunged forward . . . and then something happened."*



of ravines tumbling hundreds of feet down past my near stirrup.

Finally I reached camp. I was weak and sick ; conscious of the sudden depression of spirits—cardiac syncope is the medical term, I believe—which comes from profuse loss of blood.

But my Kashmiri herder scraped some lint, pounded some herbs, bandaged the wound ; and I lost no time in making for the security of the British side of the border. There was nothing else I could do since, with Hajji Musa Rashid evidently not fooled in the least and eager for my scalp, my usefulness among the Afridis was over.

I reported to the O.C., who gave me a wiggling. He seemed to imagine there had been personal, and not patriotic, reasons back of my little amorous escapade with the priest's wife. I did not argue. It is an ancient Army rule that the men of the Intelligence Service are always in the wrong.

# THE SURVIVOR

By

“TAFFRAIL”

IT was three days after the loss of the *Racoon*, on 12th January 1918, that the destroyers *Narbrough* and *Opal* were wrecked on the Pentland Skerries while returning to Scapa Flow in the midst of a gale of wind and a blinding snowstorm.

“Bartimeus”—otherwise Paymaster-Commander L. A. da C. Ricci, R.N.—has told the story under the title of “The Survivor” in one of his books called *The Navy Eternal*. He wrote it in the form of fiction; but as at that time he had access to the official reports, and was permitted to write subject to the usual censorship, his tale is substantially a true one.

The two destroyers had accompanied a cruiser to the eastward from Scapa Flow, but had been ordered to return to the base on account of the weather. Shuddering as they clove their way through the mountainous seas, they thankfully put their helms over and altered course to the westward, surveying their battered bridges and streaming decks, thinking of hot food, warm bunks, and hammocks, and all the creature comforts so dear to those who go down to the sea in small ships. It was bitterly cold, with the spray freezing as it fell. It blew a howling gale from the westward, and the dark clouds banked up ahead betokened snow. Then it came.

“It started with great whirling flakes like feathers about a gull’s nesting-place,” “Bartimeus” wrote, “a soundless ethereal vanguard of the storm, growing momentarily denser. The wind, from a temporary lull, reawakened with a roar. The air became a vast witch’s cauldron of white and brown specks, seething before the vision in a veritable Bacchanal of Atoms. Sight became a lost sense: time, space, and feeling

were overwhelmed by that shrieking fury of snow and frozen spray thrashing pitilessly about the homing grey hulls and the bowed heads of the men who clung to the reeling bridges. The grey, white-crested seas raced hissing alongside, and, as the engine-room telegraphs rang again and again for reduced speed, overtook and passed them."

"Sight became a lost sense." In the welter of snow and spray, with an utter lack of knowledge as to what speed the ships might be making good through the pounding, crashing seas, the exact position was more or less a matter of conjecture when once the visibility closed down to practically nothing. Moreover, the tides in the Pentland Firth are strong and erratic.

The *Narbrough* and *Opal* wallowed on.

An able seaman, No. 3 at the midship gun of the leading destroyer, flapped his arms to induce some semblance of warmth into his numbed fingers. He gazed forward towards the bridge, all but blotted out from view in the whirling snow-flakes. With a supreme faith in those responsible for the safety of the ship, he felt no particular anxiety, for bad weather was no new thing. He was accustomed to heavy seas, to biting cold, to snow, and to fog. All he longed for was for the ship to be on an even keel again; for that, and for hot food and a chance to warm his chilled limbs.

Nobody can say quite how it happened; but through a rift in the veil of driving snowflakes those on the bridge must suddenly have caught sight of a parapet of rock close ahead, with the snow lying thickly in its gullies and crevices, and the sea surging tumultuously round its base.

The engine-room gongs clanged madly; but it was too late.

The ship struck with a shuddering crash—lifted, was hurled forward on the back of a huge billow, struck again, and lurched over. A mighty wave towered up over her stern, broke thundering on board, and drove forward along the upper-deck to fill the engine-room.

The destroyer astern drove past with her siren yelping, her engines racing astern, but helpless to check her way in the seething backwash off the reef. She also struck, recoiled, struck again, and was thrown bodily on to the rocks with the seas erupting over her.

The able seaman on the gun platform of the leading destroyer was swept off his feet by a billow. Knocked against a funnel stay, he clung to it with grim desperation. The



water receded. He managed to climb higher, until he was six feet above the crests of the highest waves.

The other destroyer had disappeared in the welter. He saw the forecastle of his own ship broken off and swept aside like a plaything, while on the deck beneath him some of his shipmates tried to launch a Carley float. He saw them swept away, to vanish in the smother of whitened foam.

The ship was rapidly being beaten out of existence. The wire to which he clung alternately sagged and tautened, threatened to hurl him overboard as if from a catapult.

Then the funnel itself, hammered by wave after wave, began to lean drunkenly over the side of the ship. The seaman, swaying to and fro, found himself suspended over the maelstrom. In a moment or two a racing sea tore him from his precarious hand-hold and hurled him into the water.

Plunged deep beneath the surface, his next feelings were those of bitter cold and suffocation. He came gasping to the surface, instantly to be hurled forward in the grasp of a mighty comber. By the mercy of Providence he missed the jagged fangs of rock, to find himself afloat inside a tiny cove edged with dark, threatening-looking cliffs all streaked with lying snow.

A wave rose behind, lifted him, and shot him forward at dizzying speed, straight towards the rocky base of the cliffs where the breakers surged and tumbled riotously. Then, caught in the backwash, sucked under water, flung head over heels, another sea flung him bodily on to a beach of pebbles. Battered and breathless, he managed to stagger forward a few paces before falling to his hands and knees on the edge of a snow-drift. For the time being, he was out of reach of those murderous waves.

Regaining his breath, he sat up and stared seaward. The dusk was falling. Nothing could be seen of the remains of those two destroyers—nothing but a succession of steep, smoking rollers moving relentlessly shoreward.

He was quite alone. Not a sign of another human being could be seen, not a soul drifting shoreward on some pitiful piece of flotsam.

Scrambling to his feet, he wondered what he should do. The tiny beach upon which he stood would soon be covered by the incoming tide. Behind him, on all sides save to seaward, he was penned in by a buttress of sheer cliff. It seemed unclimbable.

But there was nothing for it but to climb if he wished to avoid being drowned or battered to pieces. Numbed with cold, his strength nearly exhausted, he started to claw his way up the steep rock.

The jagged edges and barnacles tore the skin from his hands as he fought his way up inch by inch, foot by foot. Three times, trusting his weight to an insecure hand-hold, he slipped and fell back to the bottom. At last, reaching a ledge half-way up, he rested awhile before continuing the dizzy ascent.

Within six feet of the summit he again had the misfortune to slip, to tumble heavily down to the ledge. Bruised, bleeding, his strength gone, he lay for a while. Then a sea broke over the ledge, drove him to his feet.

Utterly exhausted, he could do no more. The next heavy wave would filch him from his resting-place.

But the tide had reached its highest, though it was two hours or more, two hours of agony, during which he listened to the seas breaking and crashing in fury all round him, before he realised it.

Towards midnight, when the tide had fallen, he crept down from his ledge and followed the retreating water, filled with the idea that he could hear voices out at sea. The coming of the flood-tide drove him back to his eyrie, and the chill, grey dawn found him once more on his ledge, picking limpets from the rocks for a meal.

The sea was a riot of leaping breakers. It was nearly high-water. Of the remains of the *Narbrough* and *Opal* not a glimpse could be seen. No other man was anywhere in sight. Alone on that tiny, rocky island, the able seaman must be the only survivor. The full realisation of the horror of it suddenly broke in upon him. One hundred and eighty odd of his shipmates and flotilla-mates had gone to their deaths within a hundred yards or so of where he lay. Unless some miracle had happened, he, only, remained alive. Alive, yes; but would any one find him before he perished from exposure and exhaustion?

During the morning the weather brightened a little, and he saw some destroyers well out to seaward. They were searching for traces of their lost consorts. The A B., tying his jumper to a piece of driftwood for a flag, waved it to and fro to attract their attention. But he was too far away for his signal to be sighted against the dark background, and those friendly ships, rolling and pitching in the sea, sometimes

blotted out in driving spray, passed on, to vanish behind a headland.

It was not until the succeeding low tide, when the mangled steel-work of the wrecks was showing above the breaking water of the reefs, that another destroyer came into sight. The sharp eyes on her bridge, with their glasses on the little island, must have seen that tangled débris, for she slewed round, came slowly in towards the cove, stopped, and went astern.

His heart buoyed up with hope, the able seaman madly waved his flag. His signal was seen. The destroyer's siren wailed mournfully. He watched her lower a boat, watched it pull cautiously shoreward, at times all but disappearing in the troughs of the seas.

It was bitterly cold ; but the wildly plunging boat came closer, the bowman, his oar boated, crouching in the bows with a heaving line ready. The officer in the stern anxiously regarded the cliffs. It was ticklish work. The sea was still heavy. If once the frail boat touched the rock, every mother's son of her crew would find himself in the icy water.

The whaler approached as close as she dared, and her crew held water. The man with the heaving line flung it shoreward, the end landing almost at the castaway's feet. The lieutenant shouted to him to tie it round his waist. The boat could come no nearer without disaster. They would pull him on board.

The able seaman obeyed, slipped off his ledge into the water, and felt himself pulled through it. A moment later he bumped the whaler's planking and felt himself lifted over the gunwale.

The mouth of a flask was rammed between his chattering teeth. He swallowed gratefully. Some one wrapped him round in a blanket. A few minutes more and he was being helped up the grey steel side of his saviour. He found himself seated in front of a blazing stove, while kind, rough hands removed his sodden clothing, chafed his numbed limbs and body. When the warmth came back, he felt bruised and aching all over. The palms of his hands and fingers were raw and bleeding from that ghastly tussle with the rocks.

He was the only survivor.

# ORDEAL BY POISON

By

WILLIAM B. SEABROOK

*W. B. Seabrook is a well-known traveller in the interior of West Africa, who by sharing as much as possible in the life, beliefs and customs of the native tribes with whom he meets, makes friends and understands them. He is, as this account will show, utterly fearless of what he may meet in the African jungle, only deeply interested. Wamba is a native sorceress, who acted as guide and adviser to him on this particular journey, Bugler was a trusted native servant.*

I HAVE said that with Wamba I seemed to be dealing with two women rather than one, but I think that in reality, absurd as it may appear to present an African jungle witch in such paradoxical guise, she was not only a true sorceress, but a true Negress, true to type and true to the genius of her race—light-minded, sensual, a luxurious, pleasure-loving animal, comic at times, gaily insolent, yet good-hearted—but with another side, another soul, dark and primordial, in continual unconscious deep communication with old, nameless things, demoniac and holy.

It was only when my cherished project of crossing over into Liberia became acute that we verged on serious disagreement. I had no special business in Liberia, but an easy march westward and a small river, the Cavally, separated us from a part of the Liberian hinterland practically inaccessible from the coast, and it seemed to me an excellent opportunity to explore it a bit, entering by this easy back door. Wamba had thrown herself into trances, sometimes suffering like an epileptic, had examined various omens—had even cut open a dog, as the Greeks did their bulls and sacred doves—but every sign she could discover was negative or unfavour-

able. We were in a village called Golale, south-west of Bin-Hounien, where Katie and I had been formerly entertained by that hospitable fratricide San Dei. Wamba planned a final test, which she declared must be conclusive. It was in our own hut, brightly lighted with one of my carbide lanterns. She placed a round-bottomed calabash bowl on a flat stone tile. Across the top of the bowl she laid a stout flat wand. One end of it pointed west, towards Liberia, the other east. She called in a young man, a random villager, who had been convoked outside the hut. She stripped him completely naked, removing not only his loin-cloth, but even a leather bracelet and the strings in his hair. After a number of abortive efforts she managed to get him balanced on the rocking calabash, crouched like an ape, his toes gripping the wand, preserving his balance by spreading out his arms and touching the ground with his fingers. This arranged to her satisfaction, she began to moan and sway, invoking the Fetish. Presently the calabash spun suddenly clockwise and sent the young man sprawling, not towards Liberia, but in the opposite direction. Obviously the bowl had to spin or rock. I am implying nothing supernatural. But Wamba was sliding into one of her abnormal states, and out of it when she stopped, shuddering, came her sibyl's voice, lost, far away, high-pitched.

"There is only one thing to be done. Go take a pure-white cock and three white hens, carry them at night secretly across the river, set them free in Liberia, and come away. Only when they have had many progeny will it be safe for you to return there. The Fetish has spoken."

Good common sense is often hidden beneath seeming nonsense of oracular symbolism. Suppose she had said, "The Liberian hinterland is dangerous for you because there is neither any white control there nor any respect or liking for the white stranger. Wait until other whites have settled there, and then you can go in safety."

It was just this element of too intelligible prudent common sense that inclined me to assert my independence, as if she had been Katie instead of Wamba. Women were always telling you not to do something. If Wamba had said in one of her trances, "You will be killed in Liberia. The Fetish has spoken," I should not have insisted. But I think she was playing fair with her oracles. Much as she wanted to stop me, she had said a number of times, on the contrary, that I would not be killed, but that it was nevertheless a bad, bad business. All this had naturally aroused in me a vivid

curiosity, partly superstitious and partly in defiance of superstition, to see just what would happen. I was tired of Wamba's bossing. I had a puppy-dog's confidence that Liberians would be nice to me, like all the other nice savages I had met.

So I told her I was going to go in spite of hell and high water, and that she could come along or not as she chose. I would take Bugler and the porters, and go as far as I liked. Mori I couldn't ask to cross the border. Not that he lacked courage, but his future lay with the French administration; it was expressly forbidden politically, and if I should chance, after all, to get into serious trouble, he would be badly raked over the coals for it.

The upshot was that I was to try it with Bugler and ten volunteer porters. Wamba wouldn't go against the orders of her Fetish. She was disgusted at my hard-headedness, angry and quarrelsome, but genuinely fond of me by now. She agreed to see me all the way to the river, where there was a village camp, and to await my return there. And if I was bent on engaging in this stupidity we might as well get it over, she said. To reassert her dominance she insisted that we set out for the border camp and sleep there, so that I could start into Liberia at least fresh in broad daylight.

The trail we took that night with torches was the narrow but well-trodden main trail from Golale to the river-camp, where there was a bridge of swinging vines across the Cavally. It was used mostly by Dioula pedlars, a privileged class of natives who come and go all over West Africa unmolested. We marched uneventfully for a couple of hours, and had already heard the distant murmur of the river, when things went wrong. We came to a high curtain of raffia-grass, hung directly across our main trail, barring it. The public trail, against all reason, had become a forbidden trail. I was angry, and suspected trickery on Wamba's part. The presence of the barrier—evidently hung there that same afternoon—followed too pat on her warnings. But I did her an injustice. She was as surprised as the rest of us; she was playing fair with me, and was far more competent to deal with obstacles of this sort. It was she, indeed, who insisted on going on. This was not trivial, for to enter a forbidden trail without sanction is to court real danger. Wamba, however, was at home in such matters. She carried her own sanctions. She was opposed to my crossing into Liberia, but the idea that any local witch-doctor business could bar her in her own

forest was another matter. She had no theory of what might be occurring—probably something serious, since public trails are rarely barred—but she proposed to go in immediately alone and find out. No matter what it was, she would return and take us through, she assured us. She was really splendid. She had got out of her hammock as we talked. Alone she parted the grass curtain, which was lighted on our side by the torches, and disappeared into the darkness and silence beyond.

We waited, worried, for more than half an hour. The porters were afraid. They were saying they would not go on. Bugler said nothing, but I knew he would go anywhere. As for my own reactions, insatiable curiosity is the finest substitute for courage that I know—and the grass witch-doctor veil there, barring the trail theatrically in the dead of night, lighted fitfully by the glare of our torches, seemed a sinister dream-door to mystery. I almost wished that we might never cross its threshold, for I knew that whatever lay on the other side could never measure up to my imaginings.

When others ask what it is that drives me away from the asphalt, draws me towards deserts and jungles, I answer so sensibly, with fine, fair, honest words, which sound so well: love of travel, desire to see a strange thing, to learn more, perhaps, of savage customs, a sincere liking for primitive people—and, if I am pricked to be even more honest, the subsequent vain pleasure of seeing my name spread about in bookshops and on the tables of my friends. But all these fine, fair words are empty when oneself is the ultimate questioner and no satisfying answer comes. For I have sought less consciously, but just as diligently, whatever it may be in places more foolishly improbable than the far places—familiar rows of street-lamps in my own street, wallpaper patterns in an hotel bedroom, faces in railway carriages, advertisement pages read meaninglessly from end to end, long city streets of shop-windows peered into mechanically one by one, longer country roads, fences, and rows of trees stretching into the distance, always expecting to find and never finding—I know not what. One thing is like another, and in deepest truth I do not know what drives me, or what it is I seek. I suspect sometimes that it lies not over the hill, but under. I once met a man whose surprised eyes seemed to say he had found it, but he was unable to speak about it, or about anything any more.

Howbeit, the grass veil parted, and Wamba returned,

blinking, out of the darkness into our torchlight. She said we could go through with her to the river-camp, and from what she said I gathered that if we were to see no final thing we were at least to see a strange one. The bridge of vines was down, was broken, fallen in the water. The river-gods and demons, if propitious, would aid the mending. We could come and see what we should see, but we must follow her instructions implicitly. The porters moaned, but Wamba commanded. They moaned even more when she made them put out all the torches. We passed the barrier and went forward in darkness, though it was not completely dark when our eyes became accustomed to it, for the sky, though moonless, was bright with tropical starlight. Two men were waiting, and halted us on the outskirts of the camp. They were hurried, not friendly, but acting under instructions, and respectful to Wamba. They had a tethered goat and a big wooden bowl. They made two porters hold the goat above the bowl and hurriedly, like butchers, cut its throat with a machete. Taking a cup, they hurriedly sprinkled a little blood on our hammocks and on each piece of our baggage, seeing that no piece was overlooked, checking and marking them with blood as customs officers do with chalk. Wamba dipped her fingers in the bowl, smeared a little on her own forehead, then on the foreheads of Bugler and the porters. Then, dipping both hands wrist-deep and making me lean over the bowl, she smeared my entire face and neck, also my hands and arms, which were bare to the elbows. She smeared also my throat where the shirt opened, so that my white skin, I supposed, should pass unnoticed. They took my helmet, saying they would hide it by the trail and restore it next day. The hammocks were left on the outskirts of the camp, but the baggage was carried in. We entered the camp, which seemed completely deserted, piled the baggage in a hut, and went down towards the river.

On the river's bank, beneath towering trees (to one of which the swinging bridge of vines had been attached), people were grouped, silent, watching, waiting for something. There were several knots of them, but no great crowd. They paid no heed to us as we joined them. Wamba held me by the hand, kept me pressed close to her as if I were a child. There was no sound, no movement, save for occasional moans. There was only tension. It was not like anything I had ever seen except perhaps the pause before the liquefaction of the blood in the cathedral at Naples. There were no tom-



toms, no wailing, no mumbo-jumbo. There was only the tension.

The tension was broken by death-bleating from darkness under the trees close by. A witch-doctor in mask and high headdress came to the water's edge, bearing a dreadful mass of entrails which glistened in the starlight. With all his strength he lifted them above his head and hurled them far out into the water. There was more tense waiting, but nothing happened. The sacrifice to the river-demons was repeated. There were lighter splashes like fish jumping. Individuals were throwing bracelets and other offerings into the stream.

And then whatever it was that happened began happening.

Wamba clutched my hand tighter and pointed at the faintly rippling water's edge. At first I saw nothing. Then I saw that two ends of twisted vines were poking themselves up out of the water and crawling like living serpents, moved by no apparent human agency, up the steep bank towards the trees. They writhed like headless serpents crawling upward, dragging their long length out of the river depths, becoming thicker in body as a great emerging snake does, until they were vine cables as heavy as a man's forearm.

Now the silent tension turned to shouts and action. Men seized the cables, a long line of men straining, some wading into the stream to get a hand-grip. Tugging up the slope like a road-gang, they dragged out the submerged end of the fallen bridge, which they moored to a tree trunk.

Later, lying in our hut, I tried to persuade Wamba to explain if she could just what had happened. Of course we got nowhere. The river-demons, it seemed, had restored the bridge. If it had been salvaged only by human hands the river-demons would have ripped it down again. I asked her candidly if she didn't believe the witch-doctors had a physical hand in it. My own opinion (forced, since I have never seen any convincing proof that magic black or white can endow inanimate objects with action) was that we had witnessed a ceremony comparable to that of the Egyptian Memnon, in which priestly mechanics produced the marvel. But questioning Wamba, herself an initiate priestess, was a bit like asking a Carmelite mother-superior whether roses had really fallen from the sky at Lima. So I went to sleep in Wamba's arms, content that I had seen a strange sight, but wishing that I could believe I had seen a miracle.

Next morning, leaving my sorceress, who promised to

wait faithfully at the river-camp, but who exhausted her Bambara to express how great a fool she thought me, we crossed over into Liberia.

No magic of Wamba's and no merit of mine—but only the accident of an old pair of boots, and another man's boots at that, though I happened to be wearing them—got me and my porters with whole skins and baggage out of Liberia eventually.

Of course we had no business to be going in by this back door—not even if Wamba's oracles had been favourable. Liberia down on the sea-coast is a different matter. American Negroes, descendants of freed slaves, administer a black republic which goes not too badly on its ocean fringes. But the extreme Liberian hinterland has a bad name.

If I had possessed proper objective, equipment, and authority, things might have gone differently, but I was wandering off on a wild excursion with no better motives than curiosity and a wish to get loose for a while from Wamba's apron-strings, with no *personnel* except Bugler and a dozen scared but loyal porters. It hardly required sibylline prophecy or the ripped-out insides of unhappy dogs and chickens to foretell that we should very likely get into trouble of some sort.

Yet except for the novelty of traversing the Cavally River on a swaying vine bridge, constructed by demons and fit only for apes, our crossing from Ivory Coast territory into Liberia was, at first impression, an unconvincing displacement, like going from France into Belgium, or from Cincinnati to Detroit. One says, "Well, here I am in a different place," but the saying it doesn't mean much, since everything is just the same.

The forest was identical, the trails likewise, and the few people we met seemed in no way different from our own amiable Yafouba savages. But this was only for the first few miles. As we went deeper in we began to sense vaguely, and then more definitely, that this was not a friendly place. Nor was this a trick played by imagination, conjured up by Wamba's warnings and forebodings. All wayfaring natives go armed, of course, in the great forest. But such Ivory Coast wayfarers as we had been accustomed to encounter would always stand in the trail, greet us and joke with us, and ask questions as we passed. An assagai or a bow with poisoned arrows is a delightful touch of local colour in the hands of a

black, naked forest-man who stands gay and grinning. But it loses most of its charm when the man darts silently into the bush fifty yards ahead of you and lurks invisible behind the leaves until you have passed by. The natives here were stealthy and unfriendly. I didn't like it, and my porters didn't like it at all. Bugler was too proud to show whether he liked it or not. He marched straight ahead superbly, and we followed. As a matter of fact, it was a bad place, where frequently the casual passing stranger, even the "at home" Liberian going from village to village, was stalked and taken like other game; where even the Dioula pedlars went only by day, in armed companies. It was, by the way, the only territory of this sort which I ever touched in my somewhat wide wanderings over West Africa.

We were heading south-west, towards a village called Zambli, where there was supposed to be a small Liberian Government post, with a sort of administrator in charge. Our intention was to spend the night there, get what help and information the administrator could give us, and go deeper in, if all went well, on the following day. We hurried along, a bit nervous and jumpy, anxious to make Zambli before sunset. I felt sure that once in contact with an administration post, however isolated in the bush, we would be well received, for America and Liberia are notoriously friendly. Quite likely they might lend us guides and guards for our further excursioning.

Actually nothing whatever happened to us on the trail to Zambli. Never once were we menaced or halted. On the contrary, we were avoided. We traversed clusters of huts, seemingly deserted, without seeing a human face. The fineness that awaited us had no saving cinema qualities. It was, in fact, disgustingly undramatic.

We reached Zambli about four o'clock in the afternoon—some twenty mud-thatched huts scattered outside a central stockade, which was evidently the administration post, for a dirty little flag surmounted it. A few villagers stared at us from a distance, but none came near us, even to offer the customary water. The stockade gate was ajar. I left my porters, hammock, and baggage in front of it, with Bugler in charge, and went inside alone. A Liberian corporal, barefooted and trouserless, but wearing a shabby scarlet soldier's coat, and with a proper rifle, halted me and asked in pidgin what I wanted. Three or four other soldiers, similarly garbed and armed, lolled about. There was a big square

mud house, with windows and a veranda, evidently a sort of office, from which the flag flew ; also a dwelling, but no sign of life in either. I said I was an American traveller and wanted to see the administrator. "Mister Harris," said the guard, as one would say it in plain, homely English. It was a comfort to hear him say "Mister Harris." Now everything would be all right. Very likely it would turn out that Mr. Harris and I had mutual acquaintances in Harlem or Tuskegee. At any rate, we could talk of Booker Washington. I mounted the office veranda, asked the guard for a drink of water, and lighted a cigarette, as if I owned the place. I already felt welcome, and perhaps just a little patronising. America was a lot bigger than Liberia, and I had read somewhere that they had copied their constitution from ours. I thought of the interesting conversation we might also have about Haiti. I sat waiting for a quarter of an hour or so, thinking smugly how well things always turned out for me, and the delay seemed all right too, since Mr. Harris had probably been interrupted in his siesta.

Presently Mr. Harris emerged from his house, and I rose to meet him. His appearance was as comforting as his homely name. He was a middle-aged dark Negro in horn-rimmed spectacles, shop-bought stiff straw hat, civilian khaki, celluloid collar, and stringy black necktie. He might have just come out of the drugstore at the corner of Seventh Avenue and One Hundred and Thirty-sixth Street. He looked like a school-teacher type, probably bored by his isolation here, and hospitable. It was only after his soft, boneless handshake that I realised that the eyes behind the spectacles were not so reassuring. Not that they were savage or hostile. But they were the shifty, uncandid eyes of a man who has got something up his sleeve and is not at ease. Also I realised that he hadn't yet spoken. I had addressed him in polite, colloquial American English, sure that he would respond with the same. But now when he opened his mouth it was clear that he knew scarcely any English. It was gross pidgin he talked, and Bambara. I was beginning to be a little impatient and resentful, with a faint edge of aggressiveness in my resentment. For he hadn't even asked me to sit down, nor made any commonest offer of refreshment. I sat down without being asked, and said in his own gross but adequate medium, measuring my words :

"Look here, I am neither a trader nor a political agent, wanting any profit from you. I am a private American traveller,

a writer of books. Everywhere in French Africa I have been well received by blacks and whites. Now I am in your country, which as you must surely know is friendly with America. Furthermore, I have brought all my own food and supplies. I should like to stay a few days, if you can put me up to-night in your village guest-house. If your tribal chiefs care to visit me there will be generous gifts for them, and I should like in turn to visit some of their villages. What about it, Mr. Harris ? ”

To which Mr. Harris replied, in a queer, aggressive, but embarrassed tone, “ Show me your papers.”

“ What’s the matter with you ? ” I said. “ My passport is out there in my tin trunk somewhere, and if you insist I’ll go and get it.”

“ No,” he interrupted ; “ I mean your papers from Monrovia, your papers from the Liberian Government.”

I said : “ But you know perfectly well that I have come down from the north, not up from the coast, and could have no papers from your capital or your Government. You know that you are the first Liberian official of any sort I’ve met.”

“ So you have no Liberian papers,” he said, and, while he said it in a blaming tone, I knew that for some reason not yet disclosed he was glad that I had no Liberian papers, and was wanting to make sure. There was something sour, and it was getting more sour every minute. I stood up.

I said, “ Well, here I am. What are you going to do about it ? You are the local authority, and if you don’t want me in your territory tell me to get out, and I’ll go back where I came from.”

And right there the cat poked a clawed paw out of the bag where it had been hiding. “ You have invaded our territory,” said Mr. Harris ; “ it is grave.”

I said, “ It is pure God-damned nonsense, and you know it. What are you up to, anyway ? You are an official. You can’t get away with anything like that.”

But I was far from sure just what he might get away with. Any communication with Monrovia would take more than a month. He was saying, “ I ask you, please, to wait.” I was caught, and somewhat ignominiously. It wasn’t the four armed guards, who had stopped lolling and were on the alert. I could have walked out of the stockade, or at least I believed I could. But it was within an hour of sunset, and we wouldn’t have had a gambling chance to get out of Mr. Harris’s territory. He went away, and I waited, lighting another cigarette. I

was more annoyed and angry than seriously worried, but it wasn't pleasant. Almost immediately he returned with an elderly Kroumen (a forest tribe-man), robed, goat-bearded, hookish-nosed, with a face that was more savagely evil than his own, but less evasive, and decidedly more intelligent. He spoke doubtful pidgin. He was evidently not officially connected with the post. He was Mr. Harris's personal familiar and adviser. Mr. Harris wanted me to repeat all I had previously said. But if Mr. Harris needed reinforcements I needed them even more. I wished fervently for Mori. I could only send one of the guards for Bugler, saying I would need him to interpret. He came proudly in his tattered coat and wig of monkey fur, bugle at ease in his left hand, saluting so smartly that the guards snapped to attention. When Bugler walked like that it was a military parade. He stood gravely beside my chair. The Kroumen looked at him intently and asked him a question which sounded insulting, in a language which I had never heard. Bugler's face went blank, and he replied in Bambara, "*Ti famou*" ("I don't understand"). The Kroumen tried again. Bugler's face went blanker still, apologetic. So that was that. We did the best we could in pidgin. But presently the Kroumen and Mr. Harris, with a narrow eye at first on Bugler, began holding side conferences in their own language. . . .

That night, after they had put us in a guarded hut, abandoning even the pretence that we were anything but prisoners, Bugler gave me a graphic and complete, though whispered, version of the conference thus eavesdropped, and which had ended inconclusively, something like this :

MR. HARRIS : You saw all that baggage out there ? He told us he has food and a lot of gifts. He probably has a lot of rum too, and ammunition. And you saw that shot-gun ?

THE KROUMEN : I tell you to look at his trousers there. I don't like his trousers either. And I tell you to look again at his boots.

MR. HARRIS : But he told us himself he was just a private traveller. Besides, look at the way he carries himself. Part of the time he was polite and afraid of us. You could see it. He carries no way of commanding.

THE KROUMEN : It is not his face or his way, I tell you. It is his clothes. I have been on boats that came from England. His clothes are dirty, but I don't like them. And the boots are hateful. They are the boots of a white man who com-

mands. I have looked for sewing on his coat-sleeves, and it is true that there are no marks. But you will find his gold stripes put away somewhere in his trunk, and you will be sorry. It is not safe to do it. There will be trouble afterwards.

So that was what it was all about ! With the best goodwill in the world they wanted to rob us, but they couldn't quite make up their minds that it would be safe. It was so simple that, except for the doubtful taste of doing it under cover of Mr. Harris's officialdom, one could understand, if not entirely sympathise with them in their embarrassing predicament. Yet even academically as well as personally I disliked this Mr. Harris. For, according to Bugler's further revelations, it was not the keen-faced, savage Kroumen but the, on the whole, rather dull, soft-handed, thick-faced Mr. Harris who had finally suggested a less pleasant method of solving the problem. He had suggested, in brief, that if it seemed unsafe to confiscate our belongings and let us go free, to make trouble afterwards, it might be possible to send us away at an hour when night would forcedly overtake us, and arrange to have the whole matter concluded as quietly as possible on the trail. But this suggestion the Kroumen had also opposed violently, and Bugler, who had smelled real trouble on the veranda, was of the opinion now that there was less cause for worry. He strongly advised against making a break. We risked no harm in the hut there. And when morning came we would see, forewarned, what could be done. I thought his advice was sensible, and tried to go to sleep.

But it occurred to me, as I lay there, that this somewhat dull Mr. Harris, with his school-teacher air, his Fourteenth Street stiff straw hat, horn-rimmed spectacles, and little stringy black necktie askew in a celluloid collar, was perhaps the only really dangerous Negro I had ever encountered in the African jungle.

The old Kroumen was a savage, and if a man's physiognomy and eyes ever mean anything he was the more ruthless, perhaps even the more rapacious, of the two. But he was not stupid. It was his deterrent imagination, stimulated by the hazard of the boots, that saved us from the dull Mr. Harris. Those boots, in fact, had never been made for mine or any civilian feet. They had been made by the best military bootmaker in London, and were of the sort worn by generals, colonels, and occasionally majors with millionaire aunts or wives. They had been ordered by my friend Major Russell Haven

Davis in 1925, in Haiti—and they had pinched his feet. So he had swapped them to me for a tennis-racket and a German camera. Now, after five years, though badly down-at-heel, they still retained a vestige of their martial glory, which the Kroumen had sensed and found not to his liking.

Therefore next morning, since this Kroumen proved to be the dominant rascal of the two, Mr. Harris came announcing that we were free to return whence we had come, and added that his only reason for advising us strongly neither to linger nor to go farther was that the territory was not safe for strangers. On this point I found myself quite heartily, and for the first time, in accord with Mr. Harris. Two of my porters had skipped during the night, but the others gathered, and we prepared to go. Mr. Harris had the dull impudence to hang round with a sick-crocodilish smile, watching us distribute the loads and offering advice. The Kroumen I never saw again. He was made of different stuff. He was through. Presently a woman brought eggs and a chicken, nodding to Mr. Harris. I said to her, ignoring him, "Bring also the villager who supplied them, that I may pay him." Mr. Harris said, "No, they are a gift." I said, "No, thank you, I am not accepting any gifts in Liberia, and neither am I giving any." We were hurrying and ready to leave. Mr. Harris drew Bugler aside. "He is hoping," said Bugler, "that you will give him at least a bottle of rum and some tins of sardines." I was fed up. I said, "I'll be damned if I will. I will give all the rum I've got to you and my friends across the river."

This restored a little of my self-respect, but not much. It was an unprideful going away. That we went with a whole shirt was due neither to ruse nor to valour that could be bragged of later. I had lost face with myself, and had lost face a little with my porters. They knew I had been licked, and that we had narrowly escaped worse, negatively.

Recrossing the Cavally—to a place where everybody was friendly and people waited who were fond of me—would be a comfort of getting home, but Wamba would know how to take most of the joy out of that with her well-justified "I-told-you-so's." I had run away from Wamba, and I was coming back with my tail between my legs.

She was waiting at the river-camp, where anxious Mori had rejoined her with the rest of my porters. They came down to the bank and shouted questions as we recrossed the vine bridge, for we had hoped to be gone perhaps a week. We



had a sheep killed, and while it was cooking Bugler and I told our story. When we came to the part about the boots, Wamba made me repeat it and stopped her scolding. It seemed to mean something to her that it hadn't meant to me. Her way of understanding it was a way quite different from my white way of understanding. If I could reproduce in white language her black conception of the episode's significance it would throw some light, I think, on real Fetishist psychology. But it is going to be difficult, and if I can do it at all it will be by comparison with certain of our more familiar white conceptions.

Forcedly I regarded the episode of the boots as simply a lucky accident. Wamba, on the other hand, believes that nothing is an accident. She believed, therefore, in this case, that the whole Liberian incident was written implicitly and foreordained in my acquiring of the boots five years previously. She believed that in acquiring them I unconsciously obeyed the voice of a Fetish (here something like our old conception of a guardian angel), and that the boots themselves were consequently *grigis*; that they contained and controlled this future fate in embryo. For just as the Harlem Negro believes that the clearing-house lottery numbers to-morrow may be "dreamed" in advance, and therefore must exist already somewhere in the embryonic future, Wamba believes that all possible future events exist in embryo. This sounds like purest fatalism; but it is not. For she believes also that the future, if foreseen, may be to some degree controlled. And the real purpose of Fetish consultation and divination is to decipher and to control the future.

In the early course of our Ivory Coast wanderings, after my misadventure in Liberia, we visited an old witch-doctor who, Wamba said, was very powerful in divination.

He was an unpretentious greybeard, who received us on a mat before his hut, surrounded by no blatant or horrific mumbo-jumbo. He sat staring for a while at nothing visible, and then began to speak of forest birds. He spoke presently of the toucan, which is a large bird of brilliant, flame-jewelled plumage, with a weird, far cry. It rests on highest tree-tops, is very difficult to approach, and flies usually towards the evening.

He said, "The toucan calls there close by, and you follow. He flies farther, and you follow. You go on and on. You see his bright plumage, but then he is gone. You came here

following a bright toucan. It flies before you, and where it flies you follow."

I said, "Yes, old wise black man; but tell me, please, will I ever catch the toucan?"

"Eh, that who knows?" he said. "But you will always follow."

So we went away towards the evening, as the toucan flies, but following what bright bird I know not. We were planning to arrive back, circling, ten days later, in the ancestral village of the chief San Dei, where we had been invited to participate in sacrifices that would be offered on the tomb of his brother, Bou. But meanwhile we were wandering wide and free. And if we caught no flaming chimera we had at least some curious experiences which only the presence and friendship of an amiable witch like Wamba could have made possible for a roving white. Without her, indeed, one would have been hospitably received, but completely excluded from the special things, unaware even that they were occurring.

We arrived one afternoon in the central village of a chief called Mabya, asking shelter for the night. This Mabya had panther teeth braided in his hair, and seemed at first impression a formidable personage. Our welcome, though hospitable enough, was not exuberant. His *griot* was a rather savage fellow who seemed to be in a permanently bad humour, and not partial to travelling strangers. When we met the chief for the usual preliminary palaver the *griot* glared about as if daring any one to contradict him, and shouted, "When his father made him he made a panther."

We agreed politely that this was true, but the *griot* seemed unmollified. He continued:

"At present it is time to talk,  
But no one dares to talk roughly with him.  
This is the great forest  
Where all men must walk gently.  
This is the great forest;  
Only the panther is at home here."

The Panther himself proved to be, however, on closer contact, a very benevolent and good-natured panther. In addition to the profusion of teeth braided in his hair he wore a felt hat cocked on one side, and had a sympathetic face in which it seemed to me there was a certain wily humour. One gathered that the *griot's* words were merely a manner of

speaking. Panther Teeth saw us comfortably installed in the guest-house, and offered what immediate hospitality of palm-wine, meats, and fruit the village afforded. Even the shouting *griot* turned out to be in private life an amiable soul, and brought us six fresh eggs that evening.

Before we settled down to feel at home, however, in this village, I had a serious quarrel, but it developed quite aside, and from a wholly different quarter. It arose late on that same night. I had already gone to sleep when Mori came, with the porters' headman, saying that the porters had not eaten. There were about twenty porters with me, including some of the original ones from Dananae. Out of their own pay, which was the equivalent of threepence a day, they provided their own food for morning and noon, a bit of cold cooked rice or manioc. Sometimes they elected to go the whole day without eating, which was their own affair, since they were well paid, and could get what they needed for the value of less than a penny. But at night they always had to be supplied with a belly-bursting meal—and for this the cost and responsibility rested wholly on me.

The price of this meal, its nature, its cost, and the manner of providing it, are fairly standardised. As soon as you enter a village, planning to spend the night, you arrange with this or that private family, which either volunteers or is ordered by the local chief, to feed your porters. You pay the man of the family in advance the equivalent of two cents per head, which is the accepted price, fair and adequate. For this he provides great bowls of rice and smaller bowls of hot sauce, which must contain okra or some other vegetable, salt, and red pepper, with meat or fish scraped through the sauce to give it body and flavour. The man's wives and family usually prepare this, which takes time, but gives them a good profit.

In this village I had made the usual arrangement, and now, supposing there had simply been a longer delay than usual, sent Mori to see about it. He returned after a little while and came inside the hut.

"It is true that the porters have not eaten," he said, "and there is something not right. I found the man, but he was not in his own compound, and avoided me. He told me it was because the sauce his wives had made was not good, and that he was ashamed to give it to the porters, and that they were preparing more. But when I asked him to show me the cooked rice, then he could not show me any, and I do

not believe he has cooked any. I believe that he does not mean to feed them."

I lighted my carbide lantern, pulled on my boots, and went with him in pyjamas down into the village, which was dark. My porters were holding the man. They were gathered in front of his dark compound, and though usually patient and humble they would not let him go until I had seen him.

He first repeated what he had said to Mori, "The sauce was not good, and I am already making other." I said, "Where then is the cooked rice, and where are the fires?" He said, "In my sister's compound; not here in the village." Then, seeing me getting angry and not believing him, he said, "Alas, my cousin to whom I entrusted the money——"

I smashed him on the head with my cocomacaque stick, and when he fell, not completely stunned, crawling and trying to take hold of my feet and whining, I smashed him again and began kicking him with my boots to do him an injury as he lay on the ground. Mori made me stop, and I was glad that he made me stop, but I was glad also for what I had done.

We aroused the man's family and made them light fires, and Mori remained to see that the porters were fed.

Next morning the chief sent for me, and I went, wondering if there would perhaps be trouble. But he had already investigated the matter to his satisfaction. He said that as soon as the man recovered he would have him badly beaten again, in the presence of his wives and of the village. He said that the village was pleased, and that they all hoped we would prolong our visit. For this invitation, however, it developed that he had a special reason, which did not concern me so directly. They had learned who Wamba was, and it seemed that in Panther Teeth's river-camp village, not far distant, there was a little affair which she might be just the person to help to straighten out. It would be a great service to Panther Teeth if she could get to the bottom of it, he said, because he was very fond of fresh fish, and hadn't had any for a number of weeks. To be precise, his fisherman had been bewitched, and the fish would no longer enter the wicker-basket traps, though, as everybody knew, the river was still full of them. And up to now his local Fetishers hadn't been able to do anything.

So Wamba went to the other village on that same day to investigate, refusing to let me go with her for fear that my presence would hamper her activities.

When Bugler came with coffee next morning, Wamba was asleep on the mat beside me. She had returned from the river-village late in the night, tired, and hadn't bothered to awaken me. However, she was full of news. All that Panther Teeth had cared about, apparently, was getting his fresh fish, but the bewitchment of the fisherman, who was a popular young fellow, involved more than his wicker traps, and the river-village was in an angry turmoil. It was a double bewitchment that had come upon the fisherman. His wicker-basket fish-traps no longer caught fish. But also he was impotent. And it was this, even more than the other, that distressed him and outraged the small community. All primitive peoples, of course, regard the erect phallus both in symbol and in flesh as the mainspring of all things, the only link between yesterday and to-morrow, the only bridge between chaos and eternity. They recognise both mystically and at the same time in its purest physical simplicity the obvious truth which our church-spires, Easter lilies, new-born babes, and obelisks attest, but which with our different sense of propriety we face perhaps less frankly.

So that when Wamba had arrived, she told me the entire village had taken this most important of all matters publicly in charge. There was to be a trial by ordeal—no rare occurrence, but the commonest method of solving such problems of guilt in the forest when ordinary divination has failed. As for herself, she was simply to be one of the umpires, a natural choice, since she was a person of known magical prestige, yet completely outside personal motivations touching the village group, and therefore acceptable to all factions. The trial was to be completely public. She had to go back that morning. Did I want to come along with her now, or follow later? I could see it, then? But anybody could. That's what she was telling me. . . .

So we went down to the river-village, and thanks entirely to Wamba, rather than to any foreknowledge or initiative of my own, we saw the whole proceedings.

In my opinion (after having met and talked with the young fisherman—his name was Koro—and after having had a look at him and his fish-traps) we had before us here a case of authentic, actual bewitchment—that is to say, black sorcery in effectual operation, whatever you may choose to suppose black sorcery to be. Its elements had a quality of sharp definiteness which did not pass the limits of what I knew that evilly directed sorcery could do.

The whole village believed that he was bewitched, and I believed it too. I mean that I believed it literally, without shifty materialistic-rational qualification of any sort. Real magic is never materialistic. And here were precisely the things which I know witchcraft can do. Please understand the sharp limitation of my assertion. I do not believe that witchcraft can crack a skull or make a wall fall down. But witchcraft can destroy a man and can destroy a house by means more subtle, though just as deadly.

Concerning the means they planned to use for the discovery of the guilty person I felt less certainty of magical conviction. For when any group is put under a prolonged and dangerous nervous strain the guilty individual is quite likely to be the one who cracks. But Wamba, who should know a great deal more about it than I do, said my reasoning was beside the point, that the Fetish really worked in the poison, and that to prove it she—or I, if I chose—being totally innocent and outside the affair, could drink a gallon of the stuff, whereas, as I should see, the guilty one would be writhing in agony.

Be that as it may, if the proceedings which followed were typical, they went to prove at least one thing—that an extraordinary amount of nonsense has been written about forest poison ordeals, particularly about their crooked, faked control by the witch-doctors.

The poison had been brought in from the forest that morning, a bushel at least of thick, freshly cut bark from a tree called the Yri-ble (red-tree or blood-tree). The whole village was gathered round, watching the preparations for brewing it into a liquid. I picked up and examined some pieces. They were big, rough chunks, six or eight inches in diameter, about two inches thick. The outside was black, rough, corrugated, like an elephant's skin. The inside, where it had peeled off from the wood, was an ugly, rich, fat fibrous substance, with streaks of red serrated with white fat streaks. The red streaks were slightly granulated, like drying blood. It glistened wetly and exuded thick drops. It was more like animal tissue than vegetable. It looked like coloured pictures of tissue in anatomy-books.

The brewing was not a ritual or witch-doctor business at all. What surprised me was that it was as matter-of-fact as mixing a big bowl of punch—except for the keen-eyed watchings of the three umpires, who were the fisherman's father, the local witch-doctor, and Wamba—except also for the keen-eyed, close, unofficial watching of the eighteen or twenty

persons who must undergo the ordeal. These the commands of the Fetish had gradually weeded out from the small community. The point here is difficult to explain. For they were not all suspect in our police-court sense. They were selected only, as nearly as Wamba could make me understand, "as being the ones capable of having done it." Curiously enough, Fisherman himself, as accuser, must also drink, as must the three umpires.

A big iron family cook-pot, the largest in the village, had been brought, scrubbed with sand, and filled with water. Holding a chunk of bark over the pot, a man began scraping with a dull iron knife. As the scrapings dropped into the water a woman stirred the mixture with a stick. The effect on the surface of the water was exactly as if they were adding soap. It lathered and foamed pure white on top, but the water underneath became gradually an opaque, dirty red. The man scraped at least a dozen chunks into the water, while the three umpires tasted from time to time, spitting it out afterwards. Finally they agreed it had the proper strength.

Although it was late in the afternoon the sun was still hot, and there was a discussion as to where the drinking should take place—stupid, I thought, like people arguing about where they should spread a picnic. They decided on a stony platform, shaded, at the river's edge. Thither the bowl was carried, sloshing.

The witch-doctor, who had meanwhile put on his head-dress, came masked and ringing a bell, and made mumbo-jumbo over it, calling on the Fetish to deal justice. It was like opening a murder trial with prayer. For the first time it began to seem serious and real—a little shuddery, if you like. The casualness up to then had prevented me from feeling any sense of reality, almost disappointed me because it had not been more theatrical.

What followed also, for a time at least, was matter-of-fact rather than dramatic. The eighteen, whom I now counted, ten women and eight men, of various ages, all stripped of their personal *grigns*, to prevent counter-magic, sat in a loose circle, with the pot in the middle. Around the pot were the three umpires, including Wamba, the accusing fisherman, and myself, permitted to sit there as Wamba's protégé.

There was a calabash cup, gourd-handled, also scraped with sand, about the size of an ordinary goblet. The witch-doctor first filled and drained it in a single draught, then the umpire who was Fisherman's father, then Wamba, then

Fisherman himself. Then, one at a time, each of the eighteen arose and came and drank, returning to sit in the circle. The big bowl was still three-fourths full, and I wondered why so much had been brewed. Wamba said it was because one never knew how much would be needed, that they would presently drink again, and keep on drinking until something manifested itself. Meanwhile they sat quietly, with strained, waiting faces.

I felt myself getting vaguely uncomfortable, beginning to be nervous—and then unpleasantly realised why. The thing inside me which makes me sometimes do things against all rhyme or reason was stirring and poking at me. It was an urgency not at all of courage, and not exactly of curiosity, but the old, almost stupid urge, the psychological or pathological necessity to taste and experience everything possible. (Perhaps also, no matter how silly it may sound, there was a slight embarrassment akin to social self-consciousness, due to the fact that all the others were participating and I alone was left out.) But this is all probably too finely spun to be the truth. It simply came upon me that I had to drink some of the stuff, as a child will deliberately hurt itself, or as Chekhov's man found it necessary to let a dog bite him. This last is the nearest to what I felt, if you can understand it.

I said, "Wamba, don't you think I ought to drink some of it too?" She was not surprised, and not worried. She said, "You are a black white man, not like another. You can do as you please about it. You didn't bewitch the fisherman; so it can't possibly hurt you."

She gave me a gobletful, and I tasted it. I was satisfied then and wished that they weren't watching me, but I drank it all. It was bitterish, but not very bitter. It had a faint, unpleasant resinous flavour, and a flavour of fetid, decaying vegetable matter. But none of these was its chief characteristic. It was a violent astringent. Without causing pain it puckered the inside of the mouth and the mucous membrane of the throat, like the worst of unripe persimmons. It tasted like stuff that would certainly produce a sharp belly-ache, no matter how guiltless one might be.

Presently, in fact, I began to have a sharp but not agonising belly-ache. The witch-doctor had watched me curiously nodding his head. I think he saw a strain in my face. He said with kindly, plain intent to reassure me, "You will feel it, but be not afraid. In this matter your heart is pure, and it cannot harm you."



So that was what an ordeal by poison was. All those eighteen people sitting round there, guilty or innocent, had, each of them, a sharp belly-ache, just as I had, and a strained face. Given their belief in the super-added fatal magic element, increase the sharpness of the belly-ache, and it seemed to me quite easy to understand how guilty conscience could do the rest, even to the point of causing death in agony—even without the poison *per se* being toxically deadly. Some years ago—it was in Massachusetts, I think—a nervous girl in a boarding-school died during a mechanically harmless ragging when she was blindfolded and an icicle drawn across her throat.

It was something of this sort, inspired by an individual's guilty fear, which I supposed would now be presently occurring. But at twilight, though they had all drunk again, the strain remained static, and torches were brought. Numbers of them were moaning, praying, invoking the Fetish to be done with it. The witch-doctor and Wamba from time to time called loudly on the Fetish.

And then, without warning, the climax came. It came in the form of an agonised screech as a woman, without rising from where she sat, threw herself forward, wallowing and writhing, screaming incoherently, upon the ground. And the woman screaming her guilt there, wallowing, begging for mercy, was Fisherman's own wife. What followed quickly now was past my understanding, and they were all too excited, even including Wamba, to take time for explaining. The witch-doctor and Fisherman's angry father bent, questioning the woman, and the father rushed up towards the village, followed by the witch-doctor. They were back in a few minutes, and Wamba said, "It was true. They have found it and destroyed it." The others who had drunk were wading meanwhile into the river. Men picked up the writhing woman and took her down into the water. I thought it was an execution, that they were going to drown her. Wamba pushed me towards the water. I saw that they had the woman, holding her so that she could drink, then pounding her on the stomach to make her vomit. They were all drinking and vomiting. Wamba made me drink and vomit too, interminably, until my stomach was cleaned out.

Next morning Wamba and I returned to the big village. I have tried in recounting this affair of Fisherman's bewitchment to suggest margins of possible rationalisation for those

who have no patience with belief in magic of any sort whatever. But in the late afternoon there came a mild sequel, which you may explain or not, as you like. There came, in short, Fisherman, with a fine string of fish, newly caught fresh from his fish-traps, for my friend Panther Teeth.

# THE GIRL WHO WOULDN'T JUMP

By

JOHN TRANUM

*John Tranum was the well-known parachutist and aviator. This incident written by himself occurred when he was doing "stunts" with a flying circus.*

I WILL now take the opportunity of describing one or two of the new items we added to our repertoire at this time.

This first was the passage from one plane to another whilst in flight. This was done by means of a rope ladder, suspended from the plane to which I was to climb as it passed overhead. My job was to hoist myself out of the cockpit, mount the top wing of my plane, grab at the ladder when it came within my grasp, and to clamber up it into the plane above. It sounds fairly simple. Well, these are the attendant difficulties :

In the first place the pilot above has to be jolly sure he doesn't swing the ladder into the struts or propeller of the machine below. In the second place neither plane must either pitch or toss—and the air is far more treacherous than the sea, for, while you can apprehend and prepare for sea-waves, the waves of the atmosphere are invisible and unheralded. Then the climber must persuade himself not to fall off the wing upon which he stands, and to turn a cheerful countenance to the wind, which is rushing at and past him at a merry 100 m.p.h. This being well, and having secured his hold on the ladder, he must exercise much care at every step he takes, for the sway of the rope sometimes causes him to step confidently on to rungs which exist only in his imagination. Then he has the final effort of jerking himself up from the ladder on to the step of the plane, which is a big call on muscles.

Another stunt which went very well was wing walking. This involved a gentle stroll up and down the wing of the plane, a promenade which afforded an unrivalled view of the surround-

ing countryside and an unequalled opportunity for falling overboard. I don't suppose the wing of a plane will ever be one of man's highways, so perhaps the stunt had little practical value, but I can certainly recommend it as a really delightful way of taking the air and seeing the world.

Once when I was tired of walking, I thought a good idea would be to fall off. Looking down and seeing how uncomfortably far I was from earth, I decided to take my fall at a lower point, so I descended from the top wing to the under wing which was a few feet nearer earth. I then fell off backwards.

This provided a great thrill for the onlookers, but I think they must have been disappointed when they saw that, instead of falling the whole distance, I merely hung upside down in the air with the sole of my boot hardly six inches from the plane. But this was not my fault. I had a rope round my ankles. This rope was firmly attached to the struts of the machine, and refused me any liberty whatsoever.

When I had hung long enough for all the sheep in existence, I curled myself up from the hips and grasped the rope which held my ankles. This curling up is an unconscionable strain on the abdominal muscles, and, if at the first time you don't succeed, you are likely to be too exhausted to try again. And when this operation has been performed, there still remains the task of hauling yourself on to the wing, which is not an easy job by any means, considering you are bent double.

The most spectacular stunt of the lot, however, was what we termed wing-standing loop. This meant that I stood on the top wing over the nose of the plane, set myself, and kept quiet while the machine performed a perfect loop. This stunt is made possible by centrifugal force, which keeps the man stuck to the plane while it is upside down, in the same way as it will keep water in a bucket when whirled around in a circle.

This feat depends a great deal on the pilot, who has to see that the plane makes a good smooth loop; but it also depends a little on two things which are not seen by the people below. One is a pair of foot-straps, and the other is a pair of reins. The straps were fastened to the wing, like trunk-handles, into which I inserted my toes. The reins came up to my hands from the fuselage: one from the back of the wing and the other from the nose. Thus I was provided with some little security, which did not at all detract from the spectacular value of the stunt, as the audience could not see the straps or the slim wires from such a distance. Of course, little gadgets

like these are not used in tests or work of a serious nature ; this was only clowning.

The unpleasant thing about these stunts was that we had to perform them quite irrespective of weather conditions and the state of our artistic temperaments, if any. But it is no joke fooling about on aeroplane wings in rain, hail, and thunderstorms. In some of the regions we travelled, the weather was appallingly uncertain, and played the very devil with our plans and antics. Although thunder and lightning serve to keep many people at home, there are always those to whom the additional thrill of seeing men fight with the elements is worth the trouble of venturing out, so our " gates " were not always small enough to excuse a cancellation.

Another nasty point is that the life of the stunter depends so very much on the pilot ; murder is child's play in this game—in fact, it is almost flying in the face of Providence not to settle up old scores if you are a pilot.

It was right at the fag-end of this tour that there occurred an incident which I shall not soon forget. We were at the last station before hitting Los Angeles, and we had been getting through our programme in unusually fine weather, so that the airport was often thronged with people some time after the actual show was finished—curious to see what parachutists looked like on earth, I suppose.

I had noticed several times, mixing with this crowd, a girl of about twenty, who seemed very highly interested in all that was going on, even when there wasn't anything going on.

One day she came up to me.

" Mr. Tranum," she said, " would it be possible for me to make a parachute descent ? "

" No," I replied ; " you'd better go home. "

She didn't think so.

" But I really want to come down," she insisted, " and I mean to some time or other, so why not now ? "

" It's no game for a girl," I told her sternly, and I was about to pass on, but she caught my arm.

" Look here," she said, " you think I've no nerve, don't you ? Well, I've done tricks in a car that would make you sit up—you can ask any one. "

I saw now that I should have no peace until she had either made her parachute descent or was dead.

So with rather an ill grace I assented.

When she got in the plane she looked chirpy enough, but at about 500 feet up I saw a thoughtful, pensive look steal

over her features. The look deepened as the plane rose, and with it came a pallor that grew more and more sickly with each foot we climbed. At a thousand feet she looked pretty bad : about the colour of the underside of a shark.

Sooner we get this over the better, I thought. The poor girl was getting on my nerves.

"Here we are," I bawled at her, "you'll be all right now. Go ahead."

She clambered out of the cockpit to the step of the plane, and held on for a moment to a strut. She did look ill.

"Go on," I cried ; "you'll do."

She was on a static-line chute, with the pack in front of her and the cord fastened to the plane.

Then suddenly she jumped—and, on the instant of jumping, clawed wildly at the static line which was to open her parachute !

I looked over to see how she was going, and damn me if she wasn't dangling at the end of two feet of line, frenziedly pulling herself up on to the wing of the plane !

She must have changed her mind the very moment she had thrown herself out.

"Let go !" I shouted at her. "Let go ! You're all right !"

And so she was if she let go, for her chute was still packed.

But no : she was seized with a most frightful panic. Like a drowning cat clawing at a stick, she clutched at the wing, and just managed to get a hold on it. Here she was beaten. She simply hadn't the muscular power to heave herself into safety. Had there been a pilot in the plane beside myself, I could have brought her up with comparative ease, but I knew if I ventured from the controls the machine would topple over and fall like an autumn leaf. Nor could I land with her, unless I landed on the other wing, which would probably kill us both and most certainly wreck the plane.

"Let go !" I bawled again. "If you don't, it's all up with both of us !"

Her only reply was another spasmodic attempt to lift herself and a wild appeal for help.

"Lift me up—for God's sake lift me up !"

"I can't—I daren't leave the controls. Let go, or we bust !"

With tears in her eyes, she implored me to save her—she begged and prayed and exhorted me in all possible manner ; and in vain did I argue and scold and curse at her.

Petrol was getting short, and I was feeling windy. She had to drop right now, or we all dropped together.

So I took off my safety-belt. "If you don't let go, I'll hit you with this," I cried, and showed her the leather.

"For God's sake—pull me up!"

I raised the belt carefully, and with great deliberation brought it down with a mighty crack across her fingers.

A sharp cry of pain, and she was gone. The parachute opened instantly, and she landed like a feather.

The next time I saw her she was eager to show that she bore no malice for the blow I had dealt her, and even expressed her sorrow at the trouble and anxiety I had been caused. In fact, she took the whole affair very nicely.

I didn't. It just didn't occur to me to be polite.

"Listen," I said, "I don't want to see your face around this aerodrome any more—at any time—ever!"

To make my meaning plainer, I told her, in as many words, to get to hell out of it.

So she did, and I cannot remember ever seeing her again, but I have heard that she has since made several good parachute descents.

# ESCAPE

By

FRANCESCO FAUSTO NITTI

*Lipari, chief of the Aeolian Islands, was transformed by the Dictator of Italy into a prison for those banished from Italy for holding contrary political views. Francesco Nitti and two comrades escaped in July 1929. We give here his account of that escape.*

ESCAPE from Lipari is almost impossible. Lussu, Rosselli, and I were the first prisoners who ever succeeded in escaping from that lonely island and reaching foreign soil, and so far, alas ! we have been the last.

While we were in the midst of our plans for flight, about the middle of July 1928, we were startled by a sensational attempt to escape made by Alfredo Michelagnoli, a young student; Mario Magri, one of d'Annunzio's legionaries; Giovan Canepa, a former army officer; and a certain Domaschi.

They had been deported for various reasons, all political; but Domaschi's case was the most desperate, for he had been sentenced to no less than fifteen years' deportation for "conspiring against the State." He was a young man of few words, intelligent and calm. He had been at first sentenced to only one year of deportation. While he was serving his sentence, his mother, who was living in Rome, became seriously ill. She implored Mussolini to accord her the favour of seeing her son, if only for an hour, before she died. The Duce granted her request, and Domaschi was permitted to close his mother's eyes. But shortly after his return to Lipari he was arrested, taken back to Rome, and sentenced by the special courts to fifteen years, on a charge of having joined in a plot against the State with other anti-Fascists during the time he had spent at his mother's death-bed. At Lipari, Domaschi was imprisoned in the castle pending his transfer to a State penitentiary. In the



castle he met Canepa and Michelagnoli. The three made plans for escape and decided to put them to the test at the first opportunity. It came with the arrival of a fourth cell-companion: Mario Magri, a former captain in the artillery, noted for his bravery in the War, and one of Gabriele d'Annunzio's legionaries at Fiume. All his illusions had been shattered by the lamentable termination of the Fiume adventure, which revealed d'Annunzio's profound egoism, morbid ambition, and corruption.

Magri returned to Italy disgusted and, impelled by the spirit of adventure, went to Morocco and enlisted in the army of Abd-el-Krim, who was then fighting the French and the Spanish armies. He rose to command the rebel artillery and distinguished himself on many occasions, earning the Arab chieftain's unstinted praise. He remained with him until the end. In 1926 he was arrested in Milan, charged with "inciting former legionaries of d'Annunzio against Fascism." As a matter of fact, many of the poet's former adherents had become anti-Fascists. Magri is still a prisoner on the island of Ponza.

One night the four prisoners broke out of their cell, climbed the high walls of the castle courtyard, let themselves down on the other side by means of ropes made out of their bedding, and slipped out of the castle under the eyes of the militia.

Magri was disguised as a priest and Domaschi wore women's clothes. They passed through the village, avoiding the patrols, and reached the open country. Their plan was to find a row-boat and gain the Sicilian coast.

Unfortunately, all their daring proved vain. The alarm was given soon after their escape from the castle; armed patrols scoured the countryside and police boats equipped with powerful searchlights encircled the island.

Rosselli, Lussu, and I took keen notice of everything, thinking of our own plans. We were struck by the circumstance that, as soon as the alarm was given, the police visited our houses to make sure that we were present. Evidently we were under suspicion.

After five days of wandering in the wild interior of the island, Domaschi and his companions were recaptured.

One thing which this abortive attempt taught us was that we must hasten our own plans if we wished to be successful, for every attempt to escape involved an increase of activity on the part of our guards. The number of sentinels was doubled, and for months police launches patrolled the sea around the island. We were often wakened in the middle of

the night by carabinieri, who entered our houses unexpectedly and counted us. The governor of the island announced emphatically that no more deportees were going to try to escape from Lipari.

However, Lussu, Rosselli, and I continued our secret conferences, evolving schemes for flight. And here I must reveal that there were no longer three of us at these mysterious meetings. A fourth friend had joined us. To my great regret, I cannot, even now, reveal his real name, for he was the man who a few months later had to come personally, facing the most terrible risks, to deliver us from our island prison. Let us call him Fortunio. He had been at Lipari about two years. He is a man of the highest intelligence and the purest idealism. In his early youth he had been a workman and lived the life of an Italian proletarian, but through diligent study he had acquired an education such as few men possess. He is profoundly versed in the natural sciences, in history, philosophy, and social economy. At the age of eighteen he joined a democratic society. He was attacked and beaten by the Black Shirts, arrested over and over again, and sentenced to long terms in jail. He is as modest as he is brave and noble.

Fortunio, as I shall call him, was almost at the end of his term of deportation. He was due to leave Lipari in December 1928. But, at that time, we were all still hoping to escape together. Fortunio was not so closely guarded as we were. It was easier for him to elaborate our plans and particularly to organise the system of communication with the outside world which was essential to our success.

Already in the summer of 1928 this system of communication, the details of which I cannot disclose because it may yet help other deportees to escape, was functioning very satisfactorily. But we were always full of anxiety, fearing that some accident might destroy the work of many weary months and ruin us and the friends who had promised to assist us.

Before adopting our final plan, we had considered various schemes, some of which could probably never have been realised.

We had thought of effecting our escape by means of a hydroplane, piloted by our friends, which would descend on the sea near the island openly while we were bathing. A few strong strokes would take us out to the plane, and we would board it and fly away before our guards had recovered from their surprise. The guards, of course, would fire on the

plane, but it wasn't likely that they would hit it. We communicated this scheme to our friends beyond the sea, but it was finally abandoned.

Lussu had a plan typical of his undaunted courage. He proposed that at nightfall we should seize by force one of the big police motor-boats lying in the port and make a dash in it for freedom. He pointed out that the boats were frequently guarded only by one sentinel. During the War he had performed many acts fully as bold, and he was eager to make the attempt. I believe that his scheme was practicable, although very risky. But we gave it up when we received definite news from our friends in Italy to the effect that they were prepared to come and take us off the island with a high-powered motor-boat, if we could provide them with exact information regarding the spot where we would be waiting for them and the surveillance exercised by the warships and police vessels that guarded the coast.

We managed, through the secret channels already mentioned, to supply them with all this information and a large-scale map of the island.

The undertaking was extremely risky and dangerous. On the little island of Vulcano, which, as its name indicates, has an active volcano and which is only a few miles distant from Lipari, there is a naval semaphore station which is placed in such a position that it commands all approaches to Lipari for a distance of several miles during the daytime. Every vessel nearing the island is signalled to the police authorities. During the night a powerful searchlight perched on the crags of Vulcano sweeps the sea constantly.

Police boats were always lying in the port ready for service at a moment's notice, and other boats guarded the coast. Often they lay hidden in tiny inlets keeping watch. Any suspicious noise, every fishing-boat approaching the island, was at once reported to police headquarters.

We set to work to study the methods and movements of our guards with a patience and minuteness which only prisoners dominated by the one idea of escape are capable of. Every day we checked up on all new developments. When a police boat was undergoing repairs we managed to find out how long she would be off duty. The strength of police or militia detachments sent to reinforce the garrison of the island was carefully noted. We learned the speed of all the boats and their radius of action.

All this information we communicated to our distant

friends. I verily believe that in the end they knew the island, the customs of its inhabitants, the character of the Governor and his officers, the strength and distribution of its naval and military forces, as well as if they had been living on it for years. These preparations were begun during the last months of 1928 and continued until the eve of our escape.

Our most difficult problem was to determine the place where we should wait for our friends to take us on board their boat. It was necessary that it should fulfil two essential requirements: first, it must be near enough for us to reach easily at nightfall and to return from to our quarters before the evening roll-call, in case our friends failed to meet us; second, it must be so situated that our friends could approach it at high speed to within a few hundred yards of us without exciting suspicion.

We were forced to reckon with the possibility that our friends for some reason might be unable to be at the rendezvous at the hour fixed. In that case we would have to get back to our houses in time to be "present" when the night patrols made their rounds. If we were only half an hour late the alarm would be given and all our plans might be discovered.

The whole thing had to take place in less than forty-five minutes. In winter we should therefore have to start at 6.30 p.m. for the place of rendezvous, where our friends would be due at 7.15 p.m. If they failed to appear, we should just have time to slip back and be in our quarters at 7.30 p.m. The patrols passed at 7.45 p.m.

In summer this schedule was subject to slight modification; we should start at 8.45 p.m. and wait at the rendezvous until 9.15 p.m. for the arrival of our friends. In the event of their failing us, we could be back home by 9.30 p.m. and answer the roll-call when the patrols passed fifteen minutes later.

It was arranged that our friends on sighting the island should develop motor trouble and lie far out at sea until nightfall, out of range of the semaphore on Vulcano and the signal stations on the other islands of the group. Then they were to dash in at full speed, turning off their motors when within a few hundred yards of the rendezvous and letting their boat drift noiselessly until we could swim out and be picked up by them.

At first we had thought of a rendezvous on the opposite side of the island from that on which we were quartered in the little town of Lipari under its frowning castle. That part of the coast is almost deserted, and in the cliffs are many

natural caves which afford good hiding-places. Moreover, it is less strictly guarded. But in order to reach it we should have been compelled to pass through the line of sentinels that enclosed the limited district assigned to us, and if our friends did not come we should have been unable to return in time for the roll-call, even if we had succeeded in slipping back through the lines without being discovered. For these reasons the idea of selecting a point on the opposite shores of the island for our rendezvous with our friends, although very alluring in some respects, was finally abandoned.

We decided that our greatest chance of success lay in extreme boldness and determined to choose a place "within bounds." Our friends endorsed our decision, although it involved far greater risk for them, as the area in which we were allowed to move was so restricted that they would practically have to put their heads in the lion's mouth in coming to fetch us.

Overlooking the little port of Lipari stands an ancient building, long abandoned, which the islanders call the "haunted house." None of the superstitious fisher-folk could be induced to go near it. It had a terrace on the sea and was built right against the high grass-grown walls of the castle. We fixed our eyes on that house; we studied its position relative to the thoughts we had in mind, the streets that led to it, and the best way of reaching it unobserved. The great castle hanging over it placed the house in shadow, which was very favourable to our plans. Our friends' boat could come close in and lie under the rocks in the darkness, and we could let ourselves down from the terrace by ropes and swim out to it.

The question was how to get into the house. It was locked and shuttered, and the owner was not allowed to let deportees enter it. Some time before a homeless deportee had lived in it for a few days, but he had been expelled by the police. Nevertheless, we managed to visit that "haunted house" several times. We encountered no ghosts, but we examined its bare rooms, measured the height of the terrace, and evolved a method of entering and leaving it unobserved. Fortunio revealed all his resourceful daring on this occasion. We notified our friends, and sent them plans of the house and its position. All seemed to be going well.

But we were not fated to leap to freedom from the terrace of the "haunted house"; and all the risks we had run in exploring it proved vain.

While we were anxiously awaiting the final signal from our friends announcing their coming, the island was thrown into an uproar by an event that plunged the police into frantic activity and caused us grave apprehension.

A young Venetian deportee, by name Spangero, had disappeared, and it was believed that he had succeeded in escaping from the island.

For days police and soldiers scoured every part of Lipari. The greatest excitement prevailed among the prisoners, who were absolutely taken by surprise, for the fugitive had confided his plans to none of his comrades. Although we knew that his act imperilled our own chances of success, because it would inevitably be followed by stricter measures of surveillance, we prayed that fortune might favour him.

But after several days poor Spangero was brought back in the midst of a squad of Fascist militia, handcuffed, half clothed, and utterly exhausted.

This is what had happened :

Spangero, a young man of great daring and physical strength, which he had proved in many actions against the Fascists, had quietly left his quarters one evening about 7 p.m. and walked down to the harbour front, near the "haunted house," where he had noticed a canoe moored to the quay. The canoe was of the type used by swimmers in summer resorts for amusement while bathing off the beach. It was not designed for the open sea.

Nevertheless, Spangero, who had put on his bathing costume, got into it and paddled boldly out of the harbour in the darkness, heading for the Sicilian coast. He counted on calm weather and his muscles of steel.

Unfortunately, there was a heavy sea running outside the bay. The canoe capsized, and Spangero was forced to swim back to land. He reached a deserted part of the coast and decided to conceal himself in the interior of the island.

In the meantime his absence had been noticed and the alarm given. In the morning the canoe was washed ashore. And thus the attention of the police was directed to the "haunted house," near which the fugitive had found it. The house and its surroundings were henceforth watched and guarded night and day, and we were forced to abandon the idea of using it for our rendezvous. We passed some anxious hours, fearing that our message informing our friends of the alteration in our plans would not reach them in time.

Spangero was captured a few days later under dramatic circumstances. He hid himself in caves and ditches during the day, eluding the patrols that were searching for him all over the island, and at night stole into the town, crawling through the line of sentinels, to provide himself with food and water. The police authorities were furious.

One night, Spangero succeeded in slipping into Canneto, a small port not far from the town of Lipari, where foreign steamers frequently call for cargoes of pumice stone, the island's chief article of export. He found a German ship lying in the port, and, swimming out to it, climbed up the anchor chains. He arrived on deck covered with blood, for the rusty chains had torn the skin off his body. He gave the captain to understand by signs, being completely ignorant of the German language, that he was a political fugitive, and that he wanted the captain to hide him and take him away in his ship.

The captain, it appears, was about to consent, when the first officer interposed, pointing out that the responsibility of assisting a prisoner to escape was too great and that discovery might lead to grave complications. The carabinieri were called and Spangero was delivered into their hands. Some time later he was sentenced to three years' imprisonment and a fine of 10,000 liras for having "attempted to emigrate secretly," in spite of the fact that he declared he had had no intention of going abroad and had only asked the captain to put him ashore at the first Italian port at which the ship called.

The failure of Spangero's attempt confirmed our conviction that escape from Lipari was possible—if at all—only after long and careful preparations.

At this time our friends informed us that they also were encountering unexpected difficulties in perfecting their plans. We felt downcast and disappointed, but we were careful to conceal our feelings. Lussu and Rosselli were admirable actors. Being more closely watched than Fortunio and I, they had to exercise far greater powers of dissimulation.

For almost a year now, Lussu had been living the same, in appearance, methodical and regular life. Every morning at 11 o'clock he left his quarters and went for a walk until noon, always followed by four detectives. Every evening, without exception, he went out at 5.30 p.m. and came back at 6.30 p.m. in the winter months, and at 7.30 and 8.30 p.m. in summer. The police were by this time so accustomed to his rigid regularity and apparently immutable system of exercise

that they gradually began to believe that the tales they had been told about Lussu's dangerous character must be exaggerated. Since his illness, Lussu had also very skilfully spread reports that he was a victim of consumption and that he was obliged to live so regularly in order to avoid a relapse. In reality, although his illness had been very grave, he was now entirely restored to health. However, even the deportees were convinced that he was in a very precarious condition. And so the watchfulness of the police relaxed somewhat.

Rosselli adopted a different system to dispel suspicion. Soon after his arrival at Lipari he began to live the life of a prisoner who is resigned to his fate and satisfied to serve his sentence and get it over. He pretended to take great interest in his house, a very pleasant place a little way out of the village, just inside the boundary line. He had it repaired and furnished it with taste. The work of repairing and re-furnishing the house went on until the very day of our flight. He hired a piano, made plans for constructing a compressed air pump to draw water from the well in the garden. A few days before our escape, he requested permission from the governor to construct a spring-board on the beach where we used to go swimming. In fact, he did everything to make the authorities believe that he was resigned to his fate and preparing to serve his sentence of deportation on the island with a good grace.

He was one of the very few deportees who were received courteously in the offices of the island authorities. That was because Rosselli was always the first to salute them on the street. They were greatly impressed by these marks of respect from a prisoner who was considered a particularly dangerous and implacable opponent of the Fascist régime.

At first, his wealth had made the police fear that he might attempt to use it as a means of escape, but eventually they came to believe that just because he was rich and able to make a comfortable life for himself on the island he was unlikely to jeopardise his certainty of ease and leisure in Italy after serving his term by engaging in any desperate adventure.

Often I was forced to smile when fellow-deportees used to ask me :

" Why does Lussu always go out exactly at 7.30 p.m. and retire at 8.30 p.m. ? I understand he is still ailing, and the cool evening air cannot be good for him."

I answered that Lussu was a maniac in things like that. I knew very well that if Lussu had adhered to that schedule



for a year and a half, it was because he knew that one evening he would have to leave his house again, secretly and unobserved, never to return. . . .

Winter came. October and November passed, with their rains and storms. The sea was always rough. Our distant friends could not think of coming to fetch us in such weather, for absolute punctuality was necessary if our plans were to succeed. We resigned ourselves to waiting several months longer.

Fortunio had served his two years' deportation and left us. He had been ready to participate in our escape, even when he only had a few months left to serve. His resolution excited our admiration. Before parting from him, we arranged that after staying a short time with his family in Italy, he should slip across the border to a foreign country and help organise our escape. Nevertheless, we were loath to part from him, for his knowledge of the island, his courage and daring, filled us with supreme confidence.

Let me say right away that Fortunio was entirely successful in carrying out the plans we had made with him. Although strictly and constantly watched by the police in Italy, like all former deportees, he succeeded in crossing the frontier and making the necessary preparations to return and liberate us.

The last winter we passed on Lipari was the gloomiest time of all. Life seemed more hopeless and monotonous than ever. For the first time in thirty years it snowed, and intense cold gripped the island. Every day there was wind and rain. The wind shook the fragile houses, shrieking down the streets. We remained at home all day, reading and talking. In December I went to live with Lussu. During the long winter nights, while the sleet was beating against our windows, we cowered over a charcoal brazier and endlessly discussed our plans for escape.

At midnight, on 31st December 1928, Lussu and I welcomed the New Year which held for us the greatest of all aspirations and hopes: Freedom. All the church bells rang out, dominated by the deep-voiced bells of the cathedral beside the grim old castle. That chorus of metal voices seemed to encourage us to exercise patience and fortitude.

The decisive moment was approaching. The spring brought with its perfume of flowers and mild breezes wonderful news.

Fortunio informed us that the preparations for our escape were rapidly maturing and exhorted us to keep up our spirits

and wait patiently. It was an extraordinary experience for us to receive such words of encouragement from one who, only a few months before, had been our fellow-prisoner on the island.

April and May passed, and every morning on awaking, we all had the same thought: "Perhaps to-day we shall start."

And one day the news came at last. The same mysterious wings that had brought us so many words of hope and encouragement in the past, brought us the best news of all. Our friends informed us that they would come in their boat to take us off the island one evening in the first fortnight of July.

Feverishly we made our final preparations. In a series of secret meetings, arranged with painstaking care, we rehearsed the plan of action, as in the War details of a complicated attack were worked out in advance. Each point was discussed and agreed upon.

Rosselli lived in a house on the very edge of the village and therefore farthest distant from the rendezvous on the coast. "Zero hour" for him was fixed earliest of all, so that his arrival would synchronise with ours, as it would take us less time to get there.

Lussu was the most carefully watched and thus ran the largest measure of risk—although there was risk enough for all. Simply for one of the four hundred police agents or Fascist militia to have seen him would have been enough to wreck our plans. For once seen on the street inevitably he would be followed, as out of the house he was always trailed by four detectives. And then the schedule which he had devised and scrupulously lived up to for a year and a half had accustomed the authorities to his presence out of doors only between eleven and twelve o'clock in the morning, and in the evening from seven-thirty to eight-thirty. Once detected at other hours, and unaccompanied by his guards, of course he would have been stopped, or, even worse, followed to his destination. The consequences of such a disaster are obvious.

It was agreed that Lussu would take his usual walk. As always, he would return at exactly eight-thirty. His guards would see him enter the house, and thereafter, as usual, assume that he was safely in for the night, and go their ways. But this time Lussu was to disguise himself in some peasant clothes and get out of a balcony window at the back of the house,

which gave on to a courtyard whence it was easy to slip into a nearby dark and deserted lane.

We had many rehearsals of Lussu's part. His disguise was that of an old fisherman. The clothes and "props" had been carefully gathered through many months, little by little, to evoke no possible suspicion. He played the part admirably. With his ragamuffin costume draped around him, a rough scarf around his neck, and a disreputable hat pulled down on his head, with a pipe in his mouth and his usually straight back bent into a limping curve, we felt him quite unrecognisable, even at close quarters.

Mine was the easiest task. No special watch was kept on me, and so it seemed wise for me to go undisguised, following, though, a little-used back road.

At last the great day came, dragged out its interminable course, and was followed by eagerly awaited dusk.

Punctual almost to a second, we three arrived at the appointed spot. Everything had worked. Apparently no suspicion had been roused.

Our chosen starting-point was very near the centre of the village, just at the right side of the port and opposite the haunted house location which I have before mentioned. A small quay reaches out from land on the side of the harbour we had chosen. It is about eighty metres long, is flanked by a few old storehouses, and in the daytime is frequented by occasional groups of dock labourers and now and then a hopeful amateur fisherman. But at night the quay is deserted, and, fortunately for our plans, it lies deep in the shadows of the houses which stand on the higher rocky slopes behind it. And, happily, nearly all those houses are deserted.

Getting to the quay was the hard part, for in approaching it we ran grave risk of encountering a contingent of armed Fascisti always on duty in the vicinity.

But that evening all went well. No soldier saw us and nothing interfered with our stealthy approach to the welcome shadows. After a whispered word, we undressed at the outer end of the quay and slipped silently into the black water.

Moving as quietly as we could, we swam some 150 metres along the rocky coast, finally stopping near a very high rock which marked our appointed meeting-place. It was there our rescuers were to come, and it was there, immersed in the water up to our necks, that we waited.

Minutes passed. Nothing broke the darkness. The silence was absolute—no noise of a muffled engine came to our strain-

ing ears. Slowly the exultation of our first success turned to dismal suspense. It was heartbreaking. There we were, with our part of the business accomplished, thanks to wonderful good fortune. But where were our friends?

In an agony of doubt we waited until nine-thirty. That was the limit we had allowed ourselves—to stay longer meant almost certain detection upon our return. Nobody came. Shivering in the water, in whispers we decided to risk a further wait. For another breathless ten minutes we held our ground. In vain!

As fast as we could, we swam along the shore to the quay, dressed in the dark, and hastened back our several ways, our hearts heavy with despair for the plan which had failed, and oppressed with the certainty that we should be caught and our last chance lost.

But again luck favoured us. With our clothes sticking to our wet bodies, Lussu and I reached the house without incident. Scarcely three minutes after our arrival the patrol passed on its nightly check-up.

"Present!" we called out, our voices emotionless, though our hearts were racked with disappointment.

That was perhaps the hardest night of my life—a night of doubt and disillusionment, of poignant worry as to what had befallen our friends who had not come, and of searching sorrow for the frustration of the plan which seemed on the very verge of ending our imprisonment. After thirty months, freedom had seemed for me well within reach. And then the hope had been snatched away. How many more months of Lipari lay before us?

Rosselli, we learned next day, also had made it with only minutes to spare. Fortunately no one had seen him racing like a madman through unfrequented lanes and across fields.

From that cross-country race Rosselli had as a souvenir a great bruise on his face, just below his left eye.

"I was short-cutting through a vineyard in the dark and stumbled on a vine," he told us. "I fell head foremost, full on to the top of one of the iron posts used to hold up the vines. An inch higher and it would have taken out my eye, but luckily it just did this to my face."

Our real good fortune, of course, lay in the fact that the police suspected nothing. At least, we were no worse off than we had been before.

And later, through our system of information, we learned that rough seas had delayed our friends. They had started

according to schedule and progressed well until nearly half-way to the island. Then the sea became increasingly rough, and finally they had to turn back, actually making the return voyage with great difficulty and narrowly escaping being swamped by heavy seas.

Then another message filtered through. The boat was ready. The weather was propitious. At the appointed hour they would come.

The night of 27th July 1929 was the most momentous of my life. In mid-afternoon the three of us—Lussu, Rosselli, and I—separated. We realised that if all did not go well it might be the last time we ever would see each other. Our rendezvous, if fortune favoured us, was in the sea, at eight-thirty-five that night.

Those last hours of my deportee's life I passed wandering aimlessly about the village, just as so many other afternoons and evenings had passed in the weary months of our captivity. After chatting with groups of friends encountered on the streets, I entered "our" café. It is a modest place, the proprietor an islander. But it came to be known as the "deportees' café," and a convention had grown up that it was frequented only by us prisoners, the officers never entering, but patronising another establishment a short distance away, which to us was forbidden by custom if not by any rule.

There I chatted with friends until the clock on the municipal building struck eight-thirty.

"Good-night, boys," I announced. "I'm tired and think I'll turn in early. Good-bye until to-morrow!"

Poor chaps! They are still on that island of grief. May they forgive me for that false farewell!

"Good-bye until to-morrow!"

In my heart I hoped, more than all else, that on the morrow I would not see them. But each one of them would have tried to hide his trail in lies as I did, under similar circumstances.

Then I started to walk, very slowly, toward my house. Half-way to it, I abruptly changed my course, and, first making sure that I was not observed, hastened down to the port. Everything was silent. Apparently all was as I wished it. The heavy evening shadows seemed to reach out friendly, protecting arms, hiding me as I dodged down the quay, easily avoiding the patrols.

But at the end of the dark quay I found neither Lussu nor

Rosselli. That troubled me. But there was no time to worry. We had agreed that the first to arrive should not wait for the others. If one, or even two, could not get there, the fortunate ones should proceed as best they could.

So I slipped out of my clothes and again swam, as we had done a fortnight before, to the rocky point which by now seemed very familiar to me. I moved through the water as silently as possible, trying not to splash.

At the destination I waited, all but my head hidden in the water. From there I could see a good portion of the port, a few fishermen on the quay, a Fascist patrol along the shore, and a group of boys at play. All that was clearly distinguishable in the remaining half-light, although I myself was buried in the shadows of the cliff above me.

Suddenly the noise of a motor came to my ears. I could see nothing. The sound came nearer and nearer. Then, although apparently nearer, the sound diminished. That meant they had put on the "silencer." All at once out of the shadows emerged a darker shadow, definitely taking shape like a long black cigar lying close to the water.

It was my friends! No doubt of that now. I recognised the characteristics of the boat, just as they had described them to me.

The boat by now was perhaps twenty metres distant. Not a light on board. A horrible thought struck me—suppose it was a launch of the police? Some trick. . . . No, that could not be. It could only be *my* boat, at this exact place, at the precise hour and minute appointed.

Then, close to the water, intended for my eyes alone, a tiny spot of light flashed momentarily from the shadowy craft. That was the signal! No further doubts!

Desperately I swam towards them. As I approached the sound of the motors died away. I was almost touching the boat's side before they saw me, and then, midst stifled cries of mutual joy, they reached over and hauled me on board.

Immediately I recognised "X," who had organised the rescue. Dear friend! Brave man! Then in the darkness I distinguished the features of "Z," another friend, a man of great intelligence and energy, and, as it fortunately happened, an experienced sailor. Formerly, he was an officer in the navy, but recently had been in exile. A third figure appeared from the cabin, silently grasping my hand—three true friends, who had risked their lives that we might regain our freedom.

"You are alone?" "X" asked me at once. "The others? Where are the others?"

"I was the first to arrive at the appointed place. I waited, but did not see them," I explained. "They will come. There's no doubt about it."

My teeth were chattering, my breath still coming in gasps after the frantic effort of that swim. A coat thrown around my shoulders and a vigorous drink of brandy pulled me together.

"Where can they be? It's nearly nine-fifteen." "X" was increasingly worried. "We ought to be on our way by now."

Strain our eyes as we would, there was nothing to be seen in-shore. What had happened? Had they been captured? If the latter, the uproar was sure to start at any moment.

"Z" studied the port about us. In the open roadstead a line of lights indicated the Sicilian fishing-boats. In the port other lights marked fishermen preparing for the morning's work, and police craft.

"What's that ugly red light on our right?" "Z" asked.

"A boat of the custom-house officers."

"And that white light in front of us?"

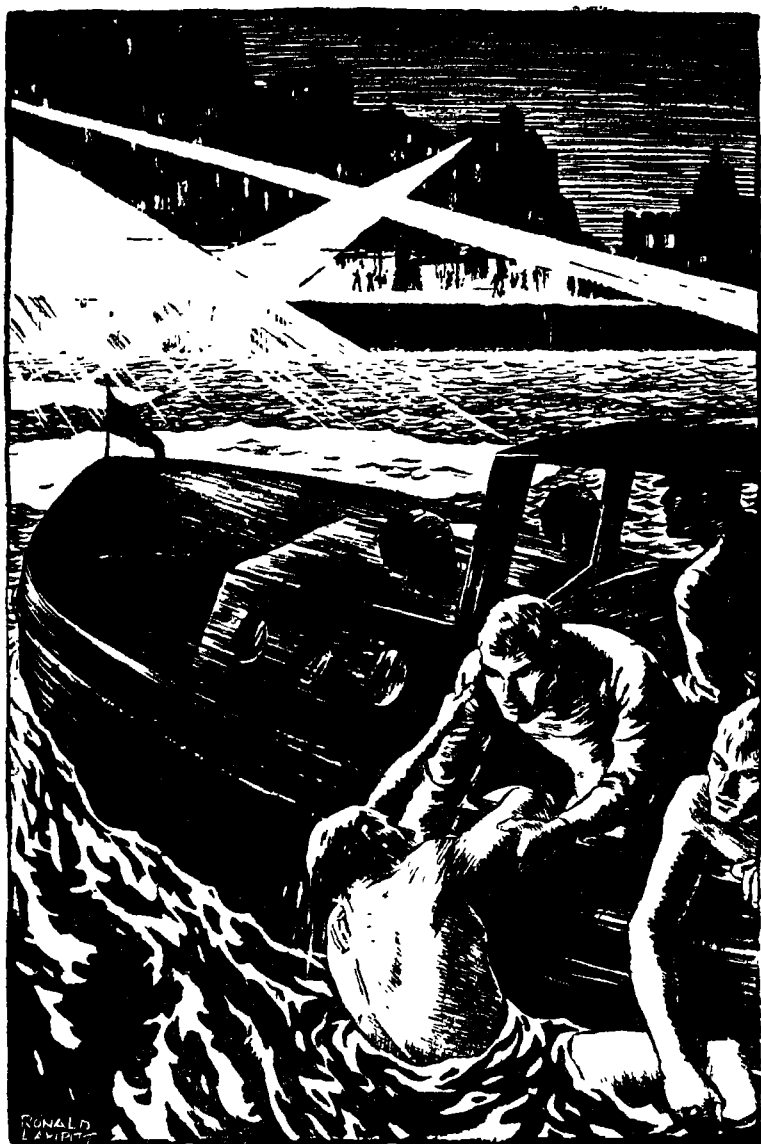
"That's a fishing-boat entering the . . ." My whispered explanation remained unfinished. Suddenly we were aware of a terrible catastrophe which had overtaken us. With the motors shut off, a strong current was sweeping us straight into the harbour! All at once we realised the swift change in our position as our launch moved out from the shadows into the full light from the port square.

Just a few metres distant we could see the people walking about, the couples at the tables, clusters of militia and police. And close at hand, there was a patrol on the quay!

With a rush, my friends broke out the oars from their lashings, got them over the side, and did their best to move the boat back against that current. But they could not do it. Their utmost efforts were in vain. Inch by inch we crept farther into the tell-tale glare.

It was a tense moment. Should we turn on the motors and make our escape? That meant deserting the others. It was unthinkable! Yet here we were with success in our very grasp and the horrible likelihood of complete failure—probably death—hanging over us by a thread.

In those awful minutes of suspense Providence was good to us. Our craft was in full view of hundreds ashore. Its details were not, of course, clear, but the presence at the very mouth of the harbour of an unlighted boat, silently drifting,



*The motors roared into life as we pulled them aboard.*





should have been enough to arouse a far less suspicious audience. But no one cried out. No one paid the least attention. Probably any soldiers who noticed us at all took us for one of the police boats. After all, they were sure that no strange craft was just then within many, many miles of Lipari.

"Z" had the amazing good-humour to make a joke of our precarious position.

"At this rate," he whispered with a smile, "in twenty minutes we will be at the café in the square and can get a drink to cheer us up!"

It was close to nine-thirty now. In a few minutes the patrols would make the rounds of our residences and our absences—certainly mine—would be noted and the alarm given. In whispers I was explaining that to the others when suddenly "X" gripped my arm.

"There! Look!"

He pointed over the stern. Sure enough, two blacker shadows moved towards us through the grey shadows of the water's surface—the heads of our two friends, swimming towards us.

"Here we are. It's us!" The breathless, low cry came from the swimmers.

"The motors!" "Z" gave the order.

No further need of prudence now. Our hope of safety lay in speed.

Instantly the motors roared into life, splitting the silence of the night with a machine-gun deluge of sound.

The boat responded magnificently, like a hunting horse gathering speed for a great jump. She literally bounded forward, skilfully guided by "Z," who brought her around close to the swimmers. In a matter of seconds we had them on board. The prow swung seaward. The motors opened wide. The great waves of our wake reached out astern and clouds of spray rolled back as our gallant boat's prow cut the waters that lay between us and Freedom.

And behind, pandemonium broke loose! The Duce's "Devil's Island" was aroused. A police boat, starting in pursuit, was no sooner under way than its motor coughed and stopped.

"No matter," yelled "Z" in my ear. "Let them come. There's not one of them within ten miles of our speed."

But none came. Of real race there was none. As we roared out into the night, except for the echoes of our engines, fast diminishing, there was no trail for pursuers to follow.

# AN ENGLISHMAN WITH THE GANGS

By

JAMES SPENSER

*This is an episode from the life of a "Limey," as the Americans call an Englishman, who joined the American gangs. His education was, to quote himself, "Borstal and Dartmoor," and he got into America by evading the immigration laws. In the particular chapter of his life set down here, he was the armed guardian of "law and order" in a gambling den in Los Angeles. He and his two associates, Spud Murphy and Castillo, were paid by the proprietor to see that there was no trouble.*

TO a student of human nature, the people who frequented Niley Payne's gaming-rooms were a fruitful source of study. I soon got tired of watching the play at the tables, but right to the end I got a real kick out of watching some of the players.

The people who interested me were persons of some consequence or notoriety—film star, big business men, black-mailers, clubmen out for the evening, toughs, robbers, politicians, kids of good family making their first efforts at wild whoopee, movie directors, boxers, "bunco" men, professional killers, high-class second storey men, and so on.

Niley's status amongst his customers provides a good spotlight on the American social structure. Socially, if one can use that word in this peculiar sense, he was quite a personality in Hollywood, and had lots of friends amongst the better-class people in the town. Everybody was aware that he had left his home town in a hurry, "for the benefit of his health." And everybody knew that he was a highly dangerous man and that he had once served a short term in a jail "back east."

It is quite impossible, of course, to imagine a parallel situation in England. Here people do not make heroes of their criminals and racketeers, but in Los Angeles, or any big

American city, there are hundreds of otherwise virtuous citizens who are tremendously thrilled if they can get to know a gang boss well enough to call him by his first name.

I suppose the real reason for the deference shown to gang bosses is that they are successful. The national gospel says that everything is all right, and anything goes, "so long as you can get away with it." And any sort of successful man—no matter what may be his particular line of "business"—is worth knowing.

I don't think I've ever met an American of any kind, except a few socialistic quacks, who could bring himself to regard any sort of moneyed person with disdain.

Even a man like Jack Dempsey, who was afraid of nobody, and, I should judge, a "white man" in the best sense of the term, always had a cordial greeting for Niley. Dempsey owned a lot of property in Los Angeles at that time. He had just lost the world heavyweight title to Tunney, but the local sportsmen believed he got a raw deal in that fight and persisted in regarding him as still champion. He was immensely popular and, even in that city where stars of all kinds are two a penny, he couldn't appear in public without a crowd of admirers treading on his heels.

Jack would stroll into the rooms now and again with a friend to play roulette for half an hour, or, perhaps, merely to have a drink and a sandwich and look on. There was something of a social vogue for Niley's joint at this period, probably because we contrived to keep it free from rows and scandal.

Dempsey would always greet the boss with a cheerful, "Lo, Niley!" and sometimes they would chat for a few minutes. There was nothing more to it than that, but the fact remains that the famous heavyweight didn't in the least mind letting people see that he and the gang chief were on friendly terms.

Lots of men and women from the film colony visited the rooms either casually or as regular customers. At different times I have seen at least a dozen stars of world renown actually playing at the tables. Nobody thought anything of it. Most of our customers came to us for much the same reason that a certain London set used to frequent the shadier night-clubs: they enjoyed the fun and got a special "kick" out of the knowledge that the place *might* be raided.

They tell me that Hollywood has "gone respectable" of late and that studio executives expect their stars to keep clear

of undesirable outside publicity. In my time most of them seemed careless enough of their reputations, but perhaps I had better not mention names.

There was, however, one beautiful star who was quite definitely one of our "regulars" for several months on end. She was then at the height of her fame and earning a fabulous salary. I never spoke to her, but I got a lot of fun out of watching her from a distance. She played with an affectation of aristocratic languor which I found immensely funny; an air of being frightfully amused at her own condescension in mixing with such a mob. It would have broken any camera-man's heart to have seen her there, to have been without his camera, and to think of the wasted "shots."

This particular movie queen had as her escort an insignificant husband, long since divorced. She evidently prided herself on the beautiful way in which she spoke "English," but, on one of her bad losing nights, I heard her call friend husband "a lousy bum" when he was clumsily helping her on with her cloak in the lobby!

Another of the Studio City visitors was a little slip of a fair-haired girl with big, dark eyes, who seemed completely out of place in that company. She only came to the rooms two or three times and always with her brother, a good-looking young man with a weak mouth.

I came to know the brother fairly well in San Quentin later on. He was one of those easy-going fellows who simply can't hold on to money. Again and again his pretty sister, who was just beginning to play promising small parts, got him out of trouble, but in the end the cops landed him for burglary and that is why, I suppose, his sister's name disappeared from the bright lights.

Though I like to see a good picture, I never could understand the "film fan" mentality. The story and the acting interest me: outside their parts I don't care a brass button about the players.

It amused me infinitely more to see a cop from the street outside stroll in, sidle up to have a word with the boss, and go out again a little later with a stiff shot of Niley's best Scotch under his belt. The ordinary "harness bulls" (traffic and patrol men) never played in the rooms, but now and again one of them would take a hand in the poker parlour. He knew, I suppose, that so far as he was concerned the cards would not be stacked. I do not, as you may have perceived, like the American policemen. In the main they are grafters,

bullies, and perjurers. I can forgive their morals, but I can't stomach their habits, or their faces, or their unfounded assumption of superiority to the common "bum" and cheap crook.

Politicians are a different proposition. Theirs is a business which fascinates me. If I had been an American I think I might have tried to muscle in on politics myself: it's the biggest racket of them all. Williams and Taylor, two of the most important ward bosses in Los Angeles, men who held no political appointments themselves but had other men's appointments in their pockets, often strolled in for half an hour's play. And to my great delight—for I saw in this the perfect illustration of that wonderful American word "protection"—we were sometimes honoured by the visit of a man who had been in the running for the office of Chief of Police. He was a lean, silent fellow named Stekel, who was actually attached to the police force in a high administrative capacity.

Many pretty women frequented Niley's place in the hope of picking up money, and these, like the other customers, I was soon able to recognise as "regulars" or casuals. Strolling about the rooms, lounging on one of the settees, always looking on, I learned a lot about the technique of "the oldest profession." Often I could make a bet that a given girl would "make" a given man. There was one of the regulars, a girl called Mavis, who would come into the rooms, stroll up and down once or twice, and mark down her victim as surely as a gunman. She specialised in middle-aged old buffers of about fifty, preferring the hard-faced type of man whose whole attitude proclaimed his belief that there wasn't anybody who could fool *him*. That kind of man always fell for Mavis.

Mavis, of course, was one of the girls who used the rooms upstairs, and, not to put too fine a point on it, she and the other "regulars" paid a "rake off" to Niley Payne. Pansy was Niley's agent in this side-line business. He was the manager of the *maison de rendezvous* into which the whole of the upper part of this big house had been converted.

I didn't particularly like this branch of our racket, and, as I have intimated, I was once a little doubtful about my attitude towards it. As a matter of fact—and I want to make it quite clear that I am not trying to be priggish for fear of offending the reader—nothing would have induced me to have been associated in any way with the kind of "homes" run by Marco. Niley's girls were not slaves. They were free to

come and go as they chose. They could "quit the business" any time they liked, and, if they wanted to get married, Niley would do nothing to hinder them. While I was there two of them actually *did* get married.

In effect Niley's "regular" girls used our upstairs premises as an *hôtel de nuit*. True they, or rather the men with them, paid a steep price, but there was no coercion and, furthermore, the girls themselves were sure of protection if they needed it. They were in fact high-class professional prostitutes who frequented the joint on Yucca Street because it offered special opportunities.

Murphy, talking to me on this subject, threw a queer sidelight on the situation.

"It makes me sore," he said disgustedly, "the way the cops won't give a girl a break. Dora" (another of our regulars) "was tellin' me how she 'made' an old farmer that'd come all the way from Iowa for a 'bend' (razzle). Lousy with dough he was, but scared stiff and all of a tremble about goin' places. Carries the collection plate around in the church back home, I reckon. He wouldn't have none o' Niley's joint, said it was too big and busy, so she takes him to a quiet spot in one o' them side streets in West Hollywood. The lousy local flatfoot saw 'em on the doorstep, an' he'd have run her in for solicitin' if he hadna found out she was one of our Janes. As it was, she hadda feed the louse a twenty-dollar bill so's he wouldn't scare her 'sugar' away. . . . Kinda lucky for them Janes they've got a place like this to come to. No trouble, all the protection they need, and one flat price to pay."

It was certainly one point of view. I came to be on speaking terms with several of the girls and found that none of them had any grievance against Niley, or complained of his methods of doing business.

I don't usually do things by halves, and when I was satisfied about the girl part of the racket, I would as readily have given a hand to settle any bother upstairs as in the gaming-rooms on the lower floor. In the best part of a year there was only one serious row up there. Some guy claimed he'd had his pocket picked and Pansy attempted to intervene in the furious argument that followed. Pansy was pitched head-first down the stairs and the clatter brought Murphy and me up at the double. We beat up the trouble-maker, carried him down to a car, and dumped him in a deserted street for the ambulance to pick up. He came out of the hospital about

a week later and was wise enough to keep the whole adventure to himself.

Writing his own story a man is forced to talk chiefly of his adventures, and of the high spots in his life, and this tends to give a false impression of his everyday manner of living. That's why I want to make it clear that Murphy, Castillo, and I sometimes went for weeks on end without experiencing even a ripple of excitement. Now and again—perhaps eight times in the year—we pulled a little private hold-up. For the rest, we patrolled the rooms, occasionally took a gun away from a guy, sometimes stopped a bother that might have developed into something worse, and, once or twice, administered a severe beating to a would-be tough guy and threw him out.

There was never any shooting. Guns are meant for business, and it was our job to see that no one else carried them into the gaming-rooms. Niley paid us, just as he paid the cops, for protection. It's a great word!

Some four months after I got to Los Angeles, and when things had been very quiet for a long time, I became involved in one of the hottest "jobs" I was ever in. It was quite "on the side" and had nothing whatever to do with the joint on Yucca Street.

Spud Murphy let us in for it. All three of us were throwing poker dice for drinks one afternoon in a favourite speak-easy on the other side of Santa Monica Boulevard, Castillo was smoking rather more than his usual allowance of marijuana cigarettes and he was blissfully "light." But Spud was as restless and fretful as a kid kept in to detention on a fine day, and he was tossing down neat whisky faster than was good for him.

"Hey, cut the guzzle, Spud!" said I suddenly. "You're gettin' all soused. What's on your mind? Or is it a tack you're sittin' on?"

He looked across at me with a wistfully speculative expression on his face.

"I'm in the helluva jam," he said. "I gotta have some dough in a hurry."

"For cryin' out loud!" said Castillo, suddenly coming back to earth from his land of pleasant dreams, "you don't have to worry about a little O-day. I gotta flock of it an' I know Limey ain't broke."

"Sure, Spud," said I, "there's lots of money in the family. How much d'you want?"



"More'n you two can rake up. I gotta have a coupla grand" (two thousand dollars).

"Jees!" whistled the Mexican. "Ambitious, ain't ya? What ya bin doin'? Bumpin' a film queen or sumpin'?"

Murphy shook his head impatiently. "It ain't anythin' like that," he said. "A friend o' mine's got himself 'in the middle' (into trouble) an' I gotta get him out. I'm gonna raise that roll if I have to stick up the biggest bank in town single-handed. . . . But it's my funeral. You ain't got that kind o' dough, and I'm not aiming to push my troubles on to you guys."

"Be yourself, Spud!" I protested. "That's no way to talk to friends. You know we'll lend a hand. We don't give a damn what you want the money *for*; thing is, how the hell are we to get it?"

"That's tellin' 'em," said Castillo. "He means me, too, Spud."

"Well, all right," said Murphy, a trifle shyly, "but don't think I wanna run you fellers into a lotta grief for nothin'."

"Come off it!" said I. "Us fellers don't mind rowin' the same boat as you, and we'd be idiots if we couldn't see you've got somethin' up your sleeve. Spill it!"

Spud flashed us a smile like a grateful schoolboy's. He looked ridiculously young, and I confess I was tickled to death at the idea of being of some use to him. In the ordinary course of things Castillo and I would have chipped in on any stunt of this sort, and the peace and quietness of the past weeks had left us in the mood for a little excitement anyway. We were ready to try out the craziest scheme, and Murphy, as I had anticipated, had got one all fixed up for us.

"We'll," he began, "I have got somethin' 'cased' (prospected), but I haven't finished dopin' it out yet. It'd need all three of us, and I was kinda 'leery' (uncertain) about whether you guys'd want to come in on it. It's a 'creg joint' over at Long Beach, an' it's a dandy little spot for, <sup>what</sup> we want. With three of us in it it's money for dirt."

A "creep joint" is a gambling saloon which <sup>what</sup> r from place to place. The proprietors do *not* pay off <sup>on</sup> police. Their only "protection" lies in the fact that they "creep" out of the district directly they think the cops are getting wise. They rent or borrow an ordinary private house and equip it, in a rough-and-ready way, for their purposes. Booze and half a dozen poker tables are the sole attractions,

and a few steerers work with the outfit to rustle up profitable parties. There's big money in these joints, but the risk is savage. If the cops do get wise you can bet your shirt that the outraged majesty of the law is going to do its damndest. Believe me, any bull who has been cheated of his rake-off is an implacable enemy. Incidentally a creep joint outfit can't stay anywhere in town for any length of time, because, even dodging the cops, it may get into trouble with the regular gangs.

And knowing all these things, I tumbled instantly to the peculiar beauty of Murphy's scheme. Whatever happened there could be no "come back" from the creep joint. Neither side could possibly call in the police.

"That's all right," said I, "so far. But how do we get in?"

"I know the guy on the door," said Spud, "an' he'll pass you guys on my O.K."

"Humph!" said I. "And what's that guy goin' to do about you afterwards?"

"Nuthin'. He'll keep his face shut. He won't want anybody to know it was a friend o' his pulled the job. . . . It's a little cinch. You c'n leave the drivin' to me an' I'll see we get a good get-away. How's it sound?"

"O.K. by me," said Castillo. "When do we go?"

"Friday night, I figure; that's the day after to-morrow. Seems there's always a big game on Fridays an' we can't wait too long. They might move on. Besides, I need the dough. Whadda ya say, Limey?"

"What time do we have to get there?" I asked.

"About three, or half-past, in the morning," said Spud. "They never break up till daybreak, and by that time they're so set on the game they've got no time for suspicions."

"I guess that's O.K. then," said I. "Everything oughta be finished at Niley's joint by the time we need to start; and that's all to the good. If we all three left early we might have Niley thinkin' things."

I don't know for certain why Spud needed the money so badly, and in such a hurry, but I have a strong suspicion that it was used to get some member of his family out of a mess. He didn't talk much about his folks, at least not directly, but from implications in his conversations with me I gathered that his mother was dead. His father, who had some sort of steady employment in the city, seems to have had the devil of a job to keep his motherless brood of youngsters in order.

Murphy's brothers and sisters ran around all over town, got themselves into all sorts of scrapes and bothers, and the unfortunate father was sometimes compelled to apply to the blackest sheep of them all for help.

Spud was genuinely fond of his family and always went to their assistance when they needed him. He did his level best to keep his brothers and sisters on the straight and narrow path, and, I believe, used to tell them shocking stories about conditions in jails, pens, and organised gangs, so as to scare them into being good.

We didn't discuss our creep joint project much further, because there was really nothing more to discuss. It is impossible to plan the details of a job like that. So much must depend on circumstances. We couldn't, for example, tell how many people there would be in the joint, or how the place would be arranged, or what kind of tough bunch we might find there. All that could wait; we were ready to chance our luck and take what opportunity offered.

The lead was left automatically to Castillo, who was always allowed the word of command in any hold-up. When he said "Stick 'em up!" there was a snarl in his voice that meant business. He had the exceptional personality of the killer. Once you know the type you can't mistake it: action is close at the heels of command. Men who were in the army have told me about officers like that—quiet enough fellows in the ordinary way, but with something of the whip-lash about them when they got going. When they said "Jump to it," you had to jump.

Both Murphy and I could do our stuff, but we realised without any argument at all that Castillo was the real killer type. He hadn't the slightest compunction. The only danger with him was that he might shoot too soon. That was a handicap in ordinary, routine gang business, but it was an asset in a stunt of this size, where a room full of men had to be dominated from the word go.

From the start everything went our way. Things were fairly quiet on Yucca Street and we closed down soon after two. We took Murphy's car and we reached Long Beach about three o'clock. The creep joint was on a side street, one of a number of big houses in their own grounds, and we drove up openly and parked the car in the front garden. Murphy knocked, and the guy on the door gave him the "once over" and let us in without any question.

The place was practically unfurnished except for the one

big room used for the gambling. There was a make-shift bar in the corner near the door, a bar-tender standing behind it, and, as I recollect, five or six poker tables in full swing. Murphy called for drinks, and asked the doorman, who had followed us up the hall, to join us. He did, and it was foolish of him. If he had stayed *outside* the door things might have worked out differently.

The bar-tender explained, conversationally, that one of the tables was sure to be breaking up pretty soon, and then we could sit in for a game. We nodded our agreement, sipped our whisky and, after a few moments, Spud and I strolled round casually, one to the left and the other to the right, to have a look at the play. Castillo remained at the bar, drinking with the barman and the guy who guarded the door, and keeping them in conversation with him. He was waiting for us to take up strategical positions.

We hadn't, I must repeat, made any plans except in a very rough and ready way. Castillo had the say-so: our job was to be ready for events. I made my way to a big table at the far end of the room on the left-hand side, and I was conscious of a tight feeling around the chest—odd, but not unpleasant. The sort of feeling one gets when lining up for a track race and waiting for the starting-pistol.

I found the place I wanted, with the wall behind me, and looked across at Murphy almost opposite. Then, as I turned my head to glance at Castillo, I heard the sharp snap of his command: "Stick 'em *up*! It's a hold-up!"

I snapped my guns out of their holsters in a flash, and Spud had both his out before I saw him draw. He was standing with his back pressed hard against the wall, and I noticed that his lips stood out, a bright youthful red, against the background of his white, strained face.

Castillo, by the door, had his right-hand gun with the muzzle almost into the stomach of the doorman. The man's mouth was opening and his hands rising as I watched. It was *exactly* like a slow motion picture, and my mind was the racing camera which produced the effect.

"Snap into it," I found myself saying. "Stick 'em *up*!"

I was perfectly calm externally, but I felt a sort of raging savagery surging through my veins. If I had been interfered with then I know that I should have shot to kill. I had never before been so close to a large group of men whom I regarded, for the time being, as deadly enemies.

There were between twenty and thirty men in the room,

and most of them had their hands in the air a second after the word was given. But one of them, a big fellow with a red face and a clipped moustache, was too slow for the general slow motion. He sat with both hands spread flat upon the table in front of him, staring at Castillo. There was the crack of a shot and a little wisp of smoke from the Mexican's gun.

The red-faced man's left hand spurted blood.

"I said put 'em *up*!" came Castillo's snarl, and the wounded man, his face gone chalk white, raised both hands aloft, the blood streaming down one sleeve.

I backed along the wall, both guns pointing towards the men at the tables, until I reached the bar. The doorman, obeying a directing motion of Castillo's gun, joined the bartender behind the bar, and both men stood holding their hands high. I motioned them towards me, pushed one gun back into its holster, and "rubbed them down" with my free hand. The bar-tender was unarmed, but the other fellow had a pair of guns which I took away from him.

By this time the hold-up was complete. There were, no doubt, several tough guys in the room, but they knew when they were beaten and we had no trouble. Castillo kept his position near the door. His one shot had done all that was necessary to complete the psychological effect of our six guns, and he and Murphy could hold the whole room without any help from me.

I put my other gun away, and, while Murphy covered me, walked from table to table and rubbed down all the card-players. I was not searching for money, but for guns, and whenever I found one I took it from its owner and slung it towards the door. I collected seven or eight, and ordered each man, after I had searched him, to join the bar-keep and his mate in the far corner of the room.

When I came to the man with the wounded hand I lifted a gun from him that was unmistakable, and I pulled back the flap of his coat and showed the whole room the badge he was wearing.

"A cop, by damn!" said the Mexican. "Give him the works!"

"Hold it!" said I. "Let the bastard go. Bullets cost money. . . . Scram into that corner, you big yellow stiff!"

I hastened his departure with a kick where it would do the most good, and there was a chorus of harsh laughter from his fellow-victims as he joined the group.

I must interpose here that, with all his faults and much as I dislike him, the American cop has guts. This guy was merely the exception that proves the rule. And the American policeman *always* carries his gun with him, even at private parties. Ninety-nine out of a hundred, caught in a similar situation, would have made a fight for it if there had been an earthly chance. If fighting was hopeless, if they saw that we had the drop on them, they would have instantly snapped up their hands. There is, after all, no disgrace in refusing certain death.

But this particular cop had been paralysed with fright. When the command to "stick 'em up" rang down the room he had kept his hands on the table for no other reason. He wasn't defiant: he was scared.

That meant that none of his fellow-cops, who would almost certainly get to know about the matter, would ever have any further use for him. If he had been shot while putting up a fight it would have been "just too bad" for all three of us if, and when, we fell into the hands of the police. I hate to think of the beatings we should have got before we ever came into court. But a cop who got hurt because he was yellow wouldn't be given a chance to work off old scores; his fellow-cops would protect *us* against *him*. And that, in the sequel, was just as well for us.

The completion of the hold-up didn't take more than a few minutes. Once we had all the bunch unarmed and shepherded into one corner of the room, our first job was to sweep all the money off the tables and stuff it into a small sack we had brought for the purpose. Then we motioned the players out into the centre of the room, one at a time, and took all they had in their pockets. They accepted fate each after his own fashion: some with a dirty look, some with a half-humorous and rueful resignation. We took only their paper money, leaving them the small change, and, in the case of a man who said: "Have a heart; I gotta helluva way to get back home," we tossed him back a five spot.

When the clean-up was complete, Murphy and I gathered up all the guns we had lifted, left Castillo to hold the door, and went out into the garden and got the car ready to go.

As soon as he heard our whistle, Castillo backed out of the room and slammed the door. He had joined us within a few seconds, and we were off and away before even a head showed at the windows.

Spud was at the wheel and I sat beside him. Castillo

was in the back seat surrounded by revolvers of every make and size. All three of us had our pockets stuffed with money, and the small sack, also bulging with dough, was bouncing about on the floor of the car as we made time over the rutty road.

"Goddammit, Spud," shouted Castillo exultantly, "you sure led us to the right spot, didn't ya?"

Spud didn't answer. From a side street a little ahead of us we saw the nose of a car stick out, and a fraction of a second later two patrol cops had pulled their Buick across the road so as to block the highway. Spud didn't hesitate. He slewed the wheel hard over, mounted the sidewalk, missed a telegraph pole by inches, and shot past the back of the police car.

"Attaboy, Spud!" hollered Castillo above the shouts of the cops. "Keep goin'!"

Spud had his foot hard down on the accelerator and there was the crack of shots from the patrol car which had swung into pursuit. They were shooting at our tyres, but the fraction of time that it took them to turn and get off again gave us a good start, and they soon gave up shooting until they could shorten our lead.

Their syren was whining and we knew the pursuit was out. We had to beat 'em to it. To be caught then, with our pockets stuffed with money and loose guns lying all about, would have simply shrieked of robbery. We were right out of our own district and we should have had the devil of a job to fix a case like that. And I don't say anything at all about how sore Niley would have been if we had been caught.

If it hadn't been for that Spud would have slowed down in the first instance. American cops, on night duty, do their patrolling in cars, and they are always stopping other cars and looking them over. It wouldn't have worried us in the ordinary way, but this time. . . . ?

Our Chrysler was a good bus nicely tuned up, but the police cars were good speedsters, too, and at seventy miles an hour we were no more than holding our own. The dawn was just breaking and we heard answering syrens which indicated that at least two other police cars were converging to join the chase.

"Don't try to make town, Spud," I shouted.

He nodded and took the next right-hand turn, cornering on two wheels. Castillo was kneeling on the back seat, gun

in hand, ready to return fire if the chase got too hot. We were going flat out, but we couldn't gain a yard. The road, fortunately, was clear of traffic, but we had soon left all houses behind us and were climbing towards San Bernadino, high into the hills.

"Step on it, Spud!" shouted Castillo. "They're comin' up on us! There's gonna be fireworks if ya don't get us outta this in a hurry."

We reached the brow of a hill, still out of effective range, and we could see our road, a grey winding ribbon, clinging to the mountain-side for miles. Spud took the first downhill bend like a racing motorist, and the first of the police cars was around it hard behind us.

Castillo left the back seat and leaned over Spud's shoulder. "Listen," he yelled, "they've got the legs of us. We gotta leave the road and go on over."

He pointed to the road and we saw that it wound round and back on itself. The grey ribbon that seemed to be almost directly beneath us was the same road as the one we were on. We could save a very long stretch if we took a chance on the steep, rough, boulder-strewn hillside. Spud shot a glance at the slope.

"Scared?" sneered the Mexican.

"You go to hell!" shouted Spud, and turned the wheel hard over. I held on with both hands. We clattered and banged down the hillside, and how Spud kept the car on an even keel is a mystery to me. Great rocks and stones came hurtling down after us, and one boulder hit the back of the car and jolted some of our glass to smithereens. The lower road came up at us like a wall, and Spud had to take it on the slant or we should have shot clean across and crashed, out of control, down the farther slope.

We made it. We hit the tarmac on all four wheels, shot out almost to the other edge of the road, slewed around, righted, and were off again hell for leather.

The cops didn't try the bank, and I don't blame them. I went back there later on when it was broad daylight and it beats me—beats me absolutely—how that Chrysler ever went down it and kept right side up. It was great driving or blind luck—probably a bit of both.

Anyway our luck held. We lost the cops, ran the battered Chrysler to a place called Watts, and parked it there with a garage-keeper we knew. Then we stole another car, drove back into Los Angeles, abandoned the stolen car, and walked



respectably up to Murphy's room, where we divided up the spoils.

There was a trifle over five thousand dollars between us. We gave Murphy his two grand, and Castillo and I went fifty-fifty in the remainder, just over fifteen hundred dollars apiece.

A day or two later I had a little chat with Niley, fixed things up with Murphy and Castillo, and started out on a little jaunt to San Francisco. I'd often wanted to see the town, and now that I had some money to spare I meant to do it.

# ALONE ON THE MATTERHORN

By

EDWARD WHYMPER

*In the summer of 1862 Mr. Whymper and a friend, Mr. Reginald Macdonald, decided to renew an attempt to climb the Matterhorn, the summit of which, at that date, had never been achieved. They engaged as guides Johann zum Taugwald and Johann Kronig of Zermatt, and also, as porter, Luc Meynet, a hunchback of Breuil. Here Mr. Whymper tells some of his adventures on the slopes of the Matterhorn during that summer.*

SUNDAY, the 6th of July, was showery, and snow fell on the Matterhorn, but we started on the following morning with our three men, and pursued my route of the previous year. I was requested to direct the way, as none save myself had been on the mountain before. While descending a small snow-slope, to get on to the right track, Kronig slipped on a streak of ice, and went down at a fearful pace. Fortunately he kept on his legs, and, by a great effort, succeeded in stopping just before he arrived at some rocks that jutted through the snow, which would infallibly have knocked him over. When we rejoined him a few minutes later, we found that he was incapable of standing, much less of moving, with a face corpse-like in hue, and trembling violently. He remained in this condition for more than an hour, and the day was consequently far advanced before we arrived at our camping-place on the Col. Profiting by the experience of last year, we did not pitch the tent actually on the snow, but collected a quantity of debris from the neighbouring ledges, and after constructing a rough platform of the larger pieces, levelled the whole with the dirt and mud.

Meynet had proved invaluable as a tent-bearer; for—although his legs were more picturesque than symmetrical,

and although he seemed to be built on principle with no two parts alike—his very deformities proved of service ; and we quickly found he had spirit of no common order, and that few peasants are more agreeable companions, or better climbers, than little Luc Meynet, the hunchback of Breuil. He now showed himself not less serviceable as a scavenger, and humbly asked for gristly pieces of meat, rejected by the others, or for suspicious eggs ; and seemed to consider it a peculiar favour, if not a treat, to be permitted to drink the coffee-grounds. With the greatest contentment he took the worst place at the door of the tent, and did all the dirty work which was put upon him by the guides as gratefully as a dog—who has been well beaten—will receive a stroke.

A strong wind sprang up from the east during the night, and in the morning it was blowing almost a hurricane. The tent behaved nobly, and we remained under its shelter for several hours after the sun had risen, uncertain what it was best to do. A lull tempted us to move, but we had scarcely ascended a hundred feet before the storm burst upon us with increased fury. Advance or return was alike impossible ; the ridge was denuded of its débris ; and we clutched our hardest when we saw stones as big as a man's fist blown away horizontally into space. We dared not attempt to stand upright, and remained stationary, on all fours, glued, as it were, to the rocks. It was intensely cold, for the blast had swept along the main chain of the Pennine Alps, and across the great snow-fields around Monte Rosa. Our warmth and courage rapidly evaporated, and at the next lull we retreated to the tent ; having to halt several times even in that short distance. Taugwald and Kronig then declared that they had had enough, and refused to have anything more to do with the mountain. Meynet also informed us that he would be required down below for important cheese-making operations on the following day. It was therefore needful to return to Breuil, and we arrived there at 2.30 p.m., extremely chagrined at our complete defeat.

Jean-Antoine Carrel, attracted by rumours, had come up to the inn during our absence, and after some negotiations agreed to accompany us, with one of his friends named Pession, on the first fine day. We thought ourselves fortunate ; for Carrel clearly considered the mountain a kind of *preserve*, and regarded our late attempt as an act of *poaching*. The wind blew itself out during the night, and we started again, with these two men and a porter, at 8 a.m. on the 9th, with un-

exceptionable weather. Carrel pleased us by suggesting that we should camp even higher than before ; and we accordingly proceeded, without resting at the Col, until we overtopped the Tête du Lion. Near the foot of the " Chimney," a little below the crest of the ridge, and on its eastern side, we found a protected place ; and by building up from ledge to ledge (under the direction of our leader, who at that time was a working mason), we at length constructed a platform of sufficient size and of considerable solidity. Its height was about 12,550 feet above the sea ; and it exists, I believe, at the present time. We then pushed on, as the day was very fine, and, after a short hour's scramble, got to the foot of the Great Tower upon the ridge (that is to say, to Mr. Hawkins's farthest point), and afterwards returned to our bivouac. We turned out again at 4 a.m., and at 5.15 started upwards once more, with fine weather and the thermometer at 28°. Carrel scrambled up the Chimney, and Macdonald and I after him. Pession's turn came, but when he arrived at the top he looked very ill, declared himself to be thoroughly incapable, and said that he must go back. We waited some time, but he did not get better, neither could we learn the nature of his illness. Carrel flatly refused to go on with us alone. We were helpless. Macdonald, ever the coolest of the cool, suggested that we should try what we could do without them ; but our better judgment prevailed, and, finally, we returned together to Breuil. On the next day my friend started for London.

Three times I had essayed the ascent of this mountain, and on each occasion had failed ignominiously. I had not advanced a yard beyond my predecessors. Up to the height of nearly 13,000 feet there were no extraordinary difficulties ; the way so far might even become " a matter of amusement." Only 1800 feet remained ; but they were as yet untrodden, and might present the most formidable obstacles. No man could expect to climb them by himself. A morsel of rock only seven feet high might at any time defeat him, if it were perpendicular. Such a place might be possible to two, or a bagatelle to three men. It was evident that a party should consist of three men at least. But where could the other two men be obtained ? Carrel was the only man who exhibited any enthusiasm in the matter ; and he, in 1861, had absolutely refused to go unless the party consisted of at least *four* persons. Want of men made the difficulty, not the mountain.

The weather became bad again, so I went to Zermatt on the chance of picking up a man, and remained there during a

week of storms. Not one of the better men, however, could be induced to come, and I returned to Breuil on the 17th, hoping to combine the skill of Carrel with the willingness of Meynet on a new attempt, by the same route as before ; for the upper part of the north-eastern ridge, which I had inspected in the meantime, seemed to be entirely impracticable. Both men were inclined to go, but their ordinary occupations prevented them from starting at once.

My tent had been left rolled up at the second platform, and whilst waiting for the men it occurred to me that it might have been blown away during the late stormy weather ; so I started off on the 18th to see if this were so or not. The way was by this time familiar, and I mounted rapidly, astonishing the friendly herdsmen—who nodded recognition as I flitted past them and the cows—for I was alone, because no man was available. But more deliberation was necessary when the pastures were passed, and climbing began, as it was needful to mark each step, in case of mist, or surprise by night. It is one of the few things which can be said in favour of mountaineering alone (a practice which has little besides to commend it), that it awakens a man's faculties, and makes him observe. When one has no arms to help, and no head to guide him except his own, he must needs take note even of small things, for he cannot afford to throw away a chance ; and so it came to pass, upon my solitary scramble, when above the snow-line, and beyond the ordinary limits of flowering plants, when peering about, noting angles and landmarks, that my eyes fell upon the tiny straggling plants—oftentimes a single flower on a single stalk—pioneers of vegetation, atoms of life in a world of desolation, which had found their way up—who can tell how ?—from far below, and were obtaining bare sustenance from the scanty soil in protected nooks ; and it gave a new interest to the well-known rocks to see what a gallant fight the survivors made (for many must have perished in the attempt) to ascend the great mountain. The gentian, as one might have expected, was there, but it was run close by saxifrages, and by *Linaria alpina*, and was beaten by *Thlaspi rotundifolium*, which latter plant was the highest I was able to secure, although it too was overtopped by a little white flower that I knew not, and was unable to reach.

The tent was safe, although snowed up ; and I turned to contemplate the view, which, when seen alone and undisturbed, had all the strength and charm of complete novelty. The highest peaks of the Pennine chain were in front—the

Breithorn (13,685 feet), the Lyskamm (14,889), and Monte Rosa (15,217); then, turning to the right, the entire block of mountains which separated the Val Tournanche from the Val d'Ayas was seen at a glance, with its culminating point, the Grand Tournalin (11,086). Behind were the ranges dividing the Val d'Ayas from the Valley of Gressoney, backed by higher summits. More still to the right, the eye wandered down the entire length of the Val Tournanche, and then rested upon the Graian Alps with their innumerable peaks, and upon the isolated pyramid of Monte Viso (12,643) in the extreme distance. Next, still turning to the right, came the mountains intervening between the Val Tournanche and the Val Barthélemy. Mont Rouss (a round-topped snowy summit, which seems so important from Breuil, but which is in reality only a buttress of the higher mountain, the Château des Dames) had long ago sunk, and the eye passed over it, scarcely heeding its existence, to the Becca Salle (or, as it is printed on the map, Bec de Sale)—a miniature Matterhorn—and to other and more important heights. Then the grand mass of the Dent d'Hérens (13,714) stopped the way; a noble mountain, encrusted on its northern slopes with enormous hanging glaciers, which broke away at midday in immense slices, and thundered down on to the Tiefenmatten Glacier; and lastly, most splendid of all, came the Dent Blanche (14,318), soaring above the basin of the great Z'Muttgletscher. Such a view is hardly to be matched in the Alps, and *this* view is very rarely seen, as I saw it, perfectly unclouded.

Time sped away unregarded, and the little birds which had built their nests on the neighbouring cliffs had begun to chirp their evening hymn before I thought of returning. Half mechanically I turned to the tent, unrolled it, and set it up. It contained food enough for several days, and I resolved to stay over the night. I had started from Breuil without provisions, or telling Favre—the innkeeper, who was accustomed to my erratic ways—where I was going. I returned to the view. The sun was setting, and its rosy rays, blending with the snowy blue, had thrown a pale, pure violet far as the eye could see; the valleys were drowned in purple gloom, whilst the summits shone with unnatural brightness: and as I sat in the door of the tent, and watched the twilight change to darkness, the earth seemed to become less earthy and almost sublime; the world seemed dead, and I its sole inhabitant. By and by the moon as it rose brought the hills again into sight, and by a judicious repression of detail rendered the view

yet more magnificent. Something in the south hung like a great glow-worm in the air ; it was too large for a star, and too steady for a meteor ; and it was long before I could realise the scarcely credible fact that it was the moonlight glittering on the great snow-slope on the north side of Monte Viso, at a distance, as the crow flies, of 98 miles. Shivering, at last I entered the tent and made my coffee. The night was passed comfortably, and the next morning, tempted by the brilliancy of the weather, I proceeded yet higher in search of another place for a platform.

Solitary scrambling over a pretty wide area had shown me that a single individual is subjected to many difficulties which do not trouble a party of two or three men, and that the disadvantages of being alone are more felt while descending than during the ascent. In order to neutralise these inconveniences, I devised two little appliances, which were now brought into use for the first time. One was a claw—a kind of grapnel—about five inches long made of shear steel, one-fifth of an inch thick. This was of use in difficult places where there was no hold within arm's length, but where there were cracks or ledges some distance higher. The claw could be stuck on the end of the alpenstock and dropped into such places, or, on extreme occasions, flung up until it attached itself to something. The edges that laid hold of the rocks were serrated, which tended to make them catch more readily, and the other end had a ring to which a rope was fastened. It must not be understood that this was employed for hauling oneself up for any great distance, but that it was used in ascending, at the most, for only a few yards at a time. In descending, however, it could be prudently used for a greater distance at a time, as the claws could be planted firmly ; but it was necessary to keep the rope taut and the pull constantly in the direction of the length of the implement, otherwise it had a tendency to slip away. The second device was merely a modification of a dodge practised by all climbers. It is often necessary for a solitary climber (or for the last man of a party during a descent) to make a loop in the end of his rope, to pass it over some rocks, and to come down holding the free end. The loop is then jerked off, and the process may be repeated. But as it sometimes happens that there are no rocks at hand which will allow a loose loop to be used, a slip-knot has to be resorted to, and the rope is drawn in tightly. Consequently, it will occur that it is not possible to jerk the loop off, and the rope has to be cut and left behind. To prevent this, 1

had a wrought-iron ring (two and a quarter inches in diameter and three-eighths of an inch thick) attached to one end of my rope. A loop could be made in a moment by passing the other end of the rope through this ring, which of course slipped up and held tightly as I descended holding the free end. A strong piece of cord was also attached to the ring, and, on arriving at the bottom, this was pulled; the ring slid back again, and the loop was whipped off readily. By means of these two simple appliances I was able to ascend and descend rocks which otherwise would have been completely impassable. The combined weight of these two things amounted to less than half a pound.

It has been mentioned that the rocks of the south-west ridge are by no means difficult for some distance above the Col du Lion. This is true of them up to the level of the Chimney, but they steepen when that is passed, and remaining smooth and with but few fractures, and still continuing to dip outwards, present some steps of a very uncertain kind, particularly when they are glazed with ice. At this point (just above the Chimney) the climber is obliged to follow the southern (or Breuil) side of the ridge, but, in a few feet more, one must turn over to the northern (or Z'Mutt) side, where, in most years, Nature kindly provides a snow-slope. When this is surmounted, one can again return to the crest of the ridge, and follow it by easy rocks to the foot of the Great Tower. This was the highest point attained by Mr. Hawkins in 1860, and it was also our highest on the 9th of July.

This Great Tower is one of the most striking features of the ridge. It stands out like a turret at the angle of a castle. Behind it a battlemented wall leads upwards to the citadel. Seen from the Théodule pass it looks only an insignificant pinnacle, but as one approaches it (on the ridge) so it seems to rise, and, when one is at its base it completely conceals the upper parts of the mountain. I found here a suitable place for the tent; which, although not so well protected as the second platform, possessed the advantage of being 300 feet higher up; and fascinated by the wildness of the cliffs, and enticed by the perfection of the weather, I went on to see what was behind.

The first step was a difficult one. The ridge became diminished to the least possible width—it was hard to keep one's balance—and just where it was narrowest, a more than perpendicular mass barred the way. Nothing fairly within arm's reach could be laid hold of; it was necessary to spring



up, and then to haul oneself over the sharp edge by sheer strength. Progression directly upwards was then impossible. Enormous and appalling precipices plunged down to the Tiefenmatten Glacier on the left, but round the right-hand side it was just possible to go. One hindrance then succeeded another, and much time was consumed in seeking a way. I have a vivid recollection of a gully of more than usual perplexity at the side of the Great Tower, with minute ledges and steep walls; of the ledges dwindling away and at last ceasing; and of finding myself, with arms and legs divergent, fixed as if crucified, pressing against the rock, and feeling each rise and fall of my chest as I breathed; of screwing my head round to look for hold, and not seeing any, and of jumping sideways on to the other side. 'Tis vain to attempt to describe such places. Whether they are sketched with a light hand or wrought out in laborious detail, one stands an equal chance of being misunderstood. Their enchantment to the climber arises from their calls on his faculties, in their demands on his strength, and on overcoming the impediments which they oppose to his skill. The non-mountaineering reader cannot feel this, and his interest in descriptions of such places is usually small, unless he supposes that the situations are perilous. They are not necessarily perilous, but I think it is impossible to avoid giving such an impression if the difficulties are particularly insisted upon.

There was a change in the quality of the rock, and there was a change in the appearance of the ridge. The rocks (talcoose gneiss) below this spot were singularly firm; it was rarely necessary to test one's hold; the way led over the living rock, and not up rent-off fragments. But here all was decay and ruin. The crest of the ridge was shattered and cleft, and the feet sank in the chips which had drifted down; while above, huge blocks, hacked and carved by the hand of time, nodded to the sky, looking like the gravestones of giants. Out of curiosity I wandered to a notch in the ridge, between two tottering piles of immense masses, which seemed to need but a few pounds on one or the other side to make them fall; so nicely poised that they would literally have rocked in the wind, for they were put in motion by a touch; and based on support so frail that I wondered they did not collapse before my eyes. In the whole range of my Alpine experience I have seen nothing more striking than this desolate, ruined, and shattered ridge at the back of the Great Tower. I have seen stranger shapes—rocks which mimic the human form,

with monstrous leering faces—and isolated pinnacles, sharper and greater than any here ; but I have never seen exhibited so impressively the tremendous effects which may be produced by frost and by the long-continued action of forces whose individual effects are imperceptible.

It is needless to say that it is impossible to climb by the crest of the ridge at this part ; still one is compelled to keep near to it, for there is no other way. Generally speaking, the angles on the Matterhorn are too steep to allow the formation of considerable beds of snow, but here there is a corner which permits it to accumulate, and it is turned to gratefully, for by its assistance one can ascend four times as rapidly as upon the rocks.

The Tower was now almost out of sight, and I looked over the central Pennine Alps to the Grand Combin and to the chain of Mont Blanc. My neighbour, the Dent d'Hérens, still rose above me, although but slightly, and the height which had been attained could be measured by its help. So far, I had no doubts about my capacity to descend that which had been ascended ; but in a short time, on looking ahead, I saw that the cliffs steepened, and I turned back (without pushing on to them and getting into inextricable difficulties), exulting in the thought that they would be passed when we returned together, and that I had, without assistance, got nearly to the height of the Dent d'Hérens, and considerably higher than any one had been before. My exultation was a little premature.

About 5 p.m. I left the tent again, and thought myself as good as at Breuil. The friendly rope and claw had done good service, and had smoothened all the difficulties. I lowered myself through the Chimney, however, by making a fixture of the rope, which I then cut off and left behind, as there was enough and to spare. My axe had proved a great nuisance in coming down, and I left it in the tent. It was not attached to the bâton, but was a separate affair—an old navy boarding-axe. While cutting up the different snow-beds on the ascent, the bâton trailed behind fastened to the rope ; and, when climbing, the axe was carried behind, run through the rope tied round my waist, and was sufficiently out of the way ; but in descending, when coming down face outwards (as is always best where it is possible), the head or the handle of the weapon caught frequently against the rocks, and several times nearly upset me. So, out of laziness if you will, it was left in the tent. I paid dearly for the imprudence.

The Col du Lion was passed, and fifty yards more would have placed me on the "Great Staircase," down which one can run. But on arriving at an angle of the cliffs of the Tête du Lion, while skirting the upper edge of the snow which abuts against them, I found that the heat of the two past days had nearly obliterated the steps which had been cut when coming up. The rocks happened to be impracticable just at this corner, and it was necessary to make the steps afresh. The snow was too hard to beat or tread down, and at the angle it was all but ice; half a dozen steps only were required, and then the ledges could be followed again. So I held to the rock with my right hand, and prodded at the snow with the point of my stick until a good step was made, and then, leaning round the angle, did the same for the other side. So far well, but in attempting to pass the corner (to the present moment I cannot tell how it happened) I slipped and fell.

The slope was steep on which this took place, and was at the top of a gully that led down through two subordinate buttresses towards the Glacier du Lion—which was just seen, a thousand feet below. The gully narrowed and narrowed, until there was a mere thread of snow lying between two walls of rock, which came to an abrupt termination at the top of a precipice that intervened between it and the glacier. Imagine a funnel cut in half through its length, placed at an angle of 45 degrees, with its point below and its concave side uppermost, and you will have a fair idea of the place.

The knapsack brought my head down first, and I pitched into some rocks about a dozen feet below; they caught something and tumbled me off the edge, head over heels, into the gully; the bâton was dashed from my hands, and I whirled downwards in a series of bounds, each longer than the last; now over ice, now into rocks; striking my head four or five times, each time with increased force. The last bound sent me spinning through the air, in a leap of fifty or sixty feet, from one side of the gully to the other, and I struck the rocks, luckily, with the whole of my left side. They caught my clothes for a moment, and I fell back on to the snow with motion arrested. My head fortunately came the right side up, and a few frantic catches brought me to a halt, in the neck of the gully, and on the verge of the precipice. Bâton, hat, and veil skimmed by and disappeared, and the crash of the rocks—which I had started—as they fell on to the glacier, told how narrow had been the escape from utter destruction. As it was, I fell nearly 200 feet in seven or eight bounds.

Ten feet more would have taken me in one gigantic leap of 800 feet on to the glacier below.

The situation was sufficiently serious. The rocks could not be let go for a moment, and the blood was spiring out of more than twenty cuts. The most serious ones were in the head, and I vainly tried to close them with one hand, whilst holding on with the other. It was useless ; the blood jerked out in blinding jets at each pulsation. At last, in a moment of inspiration, I kicked out a big lump of snow, and stuck it as a plaster on my head. The idea was a happy one, and the flow of blood diminished. Then, scrambling up, I got, not a moment too soon, to a place of safety, and fainted away. The sun was setting when consciousness returned, and it was pitch dark before the Great Staircase was descended ; but, by a combination of luck and care, the whole 4900 feet of descent to Breuil was accomplished without a slip, or once missing the way. I slunk past the cabin of the cowherds, who were talking and laughing inside, utterly ashamed of the state to which I had been brought by my imbecility, and entered the inn stealthily, wishing to escape to my room unnoticed. But Favre met me in the passage, demanded " Who is it ? " screamed with fright when he got a light, and aroused the household. Two dozen heads then held solemn council over mine, with more talk than action. The natives were unanimous in recommending that hot wine mixed with salt should be rubbed into the cuts. I protested, but they insisted. It was all the doctoring they received. Whether their rapid healing was to be attributed to that simple remedy or to a good state of health is a question. They closed up remarkably quickly, and in a few days I was able to move again.

# ESCAPES OF A STUNT REPORTER

By

J. MURRAY SMITH

“RIGHT ! Let her go !”

The sudden, ear-shattering bark of an open exhaust, mechanics scurrying clear—and the motor-cycle began its crazy career around the Wall of Death.

Rapidly it gathered speed in the bottom of the pit, leaping fiercely around in ten-yard circles, while I prepared for an exciting few minutes.

*I was sitting on the handlebars.*

The driver, Earl Ketring, leaned forward and shouted one word into my ear.

“Now !”

As, instinctively, I threw my weight inwards, the machine fairly leapt from the ground and shot up the wall, so violently, that I was pinned into my place.

The world had turned upside down, but I gripped the bars between my bent knees and hung on grimly. The heavily studded tyre was spinning between my feet, leaping and plunging against a vague, dark background.

Then I saw it assume curious shapes, twisting and buckling unaccountably, although the machine was still travelling without mishap.

The wall too—that vague background—had turned back and was rising and falling in oily waves. With a sickening jolt of terror I realised that I had been seized with giddiness, was on the point of falling . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

You know, of course, about this Wall of Death. It is a circular wooden pit, ten yards across and sixteen feet deep. The wall is perfectly upright except near the bottom, where it slopes towards the centre, saucer fashion.

To watch the performance, you stand on a narrow platform, to which you have climbed by a stairway, looking over the top of the wall.

In the well of the pit, there is generally a small party of riders and mechanics, tinkering with powerful looking motor-cycles.

A rider mounts a machine, kicks it into life, and begins to ride round the bottom of the pit with increasing speed, while the other people draw exactly into the centre of the pit and well out of the way of the rider.

The motor-cycle gathers momentum, and the noise of the exhaust—there are no silencers—rises to nerve-shattering intensity. Then, when the rider is hurtling around like a human top, he gives a curious jerk of the handlebars and shoots up the wall. For a split second it looks as though he must crash into the horrified people on the platform, but he pulls to one side and careers round the wall within a few inches of the top.

That rider is taking his life in his hands. If he permits his speed to drop when he is leaning down too far, he will crash to the bottom with three hundred pounds of machinery on top of him. A high speed is essential if he is to defy gravity and remain on the wall.

Several times he circles the pit, and then, reducing his speed, skids in sickening fashion to the bottom again.

Then another machine takes the wall, while the first rider sets out to pursue the other. Sixty, seventy, eighty miles an hour—all within that confined circular space—and one rider passes the other in mid-air. The faintest error in judgment, the least touch of an elbow, and both would crash—perhaps to their death. They have never misjudged yet, simply because they would not be still riding if they had.

The Wall of Death is a stunt which grew from a once famous cycling act. That was the time when a pedal cyclist dashed round an inclined wooden wall, risking a nasty spill. His speed was necessarily low, of course, and he had not far to fall, for the wall upon which he rode was not nearly upright.

That, however, was over twenty years ago. Then a young man named Perry conceived the idea of using a motor-cycle, and gradually adopted a steeper wall. He is now world-famous as Captain Bob Perry, the most daring motor-cycle rider ever known.

Times out of number he has crashed, and there is scarcely a bone in his body which has not been broken at least once.

To-day he has a knee-cap of silver, besides various other metal additions to his bone structure.

Perry has taught daring young men—and one or two women—to ride the Wall of Death. Earl Ketring is one of the men.

I met him at Olympia, where the proprietors of the Wall of Death were giving a show. After a brief talk, I signed a little draft to the effect that I was risking my own fool neck in undertaking this maddest of mad trips.

"Nice day, I guess," Ketring grinned, and bent over a motor-cycle. I noticed the powerful build of his shoulders and the slight bow of his legs. Ketring is a small man but finely developed.

He gave me brief instructions. I was to sit on the tank of the machine with my feet over the handlebars, hold the bars fairly lightly, and lean well forward. . . .

Then Ketring was in the saddle behind me, and the gallant little engine was spitting and roaring. We began to move, suddenly and fiercely. I gripped the handle bars with my bent legs and took a deep breath.

Next moment the world turned upside down. I realised that we had dashed up the wall, and instinctively threw my weight inwards.

I dared not shut my eyes, but I knew that at any moment I should fall over the front wheel—I could not overcome the awful, sickening giddiness.

*Another second and I should have crashed to death, dragging Ketring with me.*

"Head—head *up*!" screamed a voice in my ear, and with a despairing effort I threw my head back. In that instant I caught a glimpse of faces beneath my feet, and that touch of realism somehow restored my failing senses.

My head cleared at once, and I almost liked the sensation of roaring round and round, a few inches from the top of the wall, and with the roof of the building a little distance away on my right!

I had long since lost all sense of direction. I moved, so to speak, to left or to right—actually, up the wall and down—and nothing else seemed to matter. Once, though, I tried to raise my foot, and found that movement quite impossible. We were, of course, being thrown fiercely against the wall, and my muscular effort could not overcome the centrifugal force.

And then, as suddenly as it had started, the experience came to an end. I felt Ketring heave the bike towards the upright, and knew by the noise that he had "cut out" the

engine. The bottom dropped out of everything, and I guessed we were going through that awful skid to the bottom of the wall. Once round the pit, with brakes screeching, and we came to a standstill.

That was one of my early ordeals of terror. These experiences never came easily to me, but I was not spared them on that account. Editors liked such stuff.

A few days later, I was sent up a chimney shaft, a great derelict that thrust its nose a hundred and twenty feet towards the sky.

Up the side of it ran a crazy wooden ladder, secured here and there by thin steel bars driven into the brickwork. At the very top was what looked like a match-stick—a slight scaffold consisting of a single board.

"This is a very dangerous structure," my companion said. "It has been struck by lightning three times in the past year or two, and is in real danger of collapsing. Of course, it has been out of commission now for years."

The speaker was William Larkins the steeplejack, a member of the famous family with whose name the romance of towers and steeples is always associated.

Judging by the dilapidation and chaos around, it was difficult to believe that this Thames-side rubbish-dump had ever been a busy factory. The only thing of dignity was the tall, slender chimney-shaft; and that, it seemed, was rotten at heart, doomed to be razed to the ground.

At the moment, however, there were various objections to felling the shaft completely. It could, for instance, only be allowed to fall in one direction, to avoid two important streets—and that particular direction would call for the demolition of several outbuildings. For the time being at any rate, the old crotch had to be patched up.

"The brickwork at the top," Mr. Larkins went on, "was in such bad condition, that it could be broken by hand. It was not strong enough to bear the scaffolding, and we have so far thrown down about five feet of the upper masonry. That was in danger of falling anyway. We have now got down to more or less good brick, and we are going to put upon that some new stuff to hold it in position. After that, we shall bind the whole stack with iron bands."

He pointed to an ugly, ominous crack running from the top of the shaft to about half-way down.

"That crack," he said, "began in quite a small way. Then particles of dust and mortar fell down into it, hardened



and formed a wedge. Every time the chimney shook, the crack opened a little, and the wedge slipped down a little more. You can see the result. All that is necessary now is a really good frost, with ice settling inside that crack. The chimney would break apart and come down like a pack of cards. Shall we go up now?"

With mixed feelings I made for the slender ladder set against the base of the shaft.

"You go first," the steeplejack said. "I'll follow."

I drew a long breath and began to climb. At first I went fairly quickly, but then I settled down to a steady pace, and climbed with even steps until I was level with the house-tops. I glanced up, but the top seemed as far away as ever, and I was beginning to feel a slight swaying about the ladder.

"Larkins is shaking the thing a lot," I thought, and looked down. There was no sign of Larkins. The ladder stretched below me like a long tube, but I was the only one upon it.

I scarcely liked the idea of going up alone. What should I do when I got up there, anyway? Besides, it was bitterly cold, and I had taken off my overcoat.

Why hadn't I thought of keeping my gloves on? I had a splinter in my finger, and I could scarcely feel the palms of my hands. Perhaps I ought to turn back, just until Larkins was ready.

Suppose he should laugh at me! No, I had better go on. Ah, this is better—a little more confident now. I must be two-thirds of the way up—that would be about seventy or eighty feet. I'd better not look down, though.

My back is aching abominably. My legs and arms ache too. My eyes are watering. For a second my head swims. Then I take a new grip and plod wearily upwards again.

The scaffold is nearer now. I can see that it is just a nine-inch board set across side timbers. Why, how can I get on to it—it's clean across the ladder!

Nearer, now. Ten, eight, six, four more rungs. And here's this confounded board across the brickwork—and the ladder goes underneath it. Perhaps, if I stretched my arm I might lean outwards and grip the ladder again above the board. Ah, that's how it's done. A heave, a roll sideways, and I'm half sitting on the board—though I scarcely like the way it bends beneath my weight.

*What's this? Why, here is Larkins right behind me. Of course, he must have known that I should take twice as long as a steeplejack to reach the top. . . .*

"Well," said Mr. Larkins pleasantly, "here we are. Do you like the view?"

I observed the view. The Thames and its dingy environs was spread out beneath us, until the whole scene faded into the mist. In the streets below the buses and people looked absurdly small, and it was difficult to believe that the squat little boxes down there were the tall buildings lining the streets.

Curiously enough I felt no dizziness. But there was some queer sensation assailing me which was altogether unpleasant, and which I did not at first recognise. . . . Then I understood. I remembered the faint rolling of a liner, and this sensation was rather similar. Ever so slightly that chimney was rocking on its base. I swear I could hear an occasional cracking sound, but fortunately for my peace of mind the noise did not seem to worry Mr. Larkins.

The cold was intense. The wind moaned around the shaft, whirling brick-dust into our eyes. Larkins was nonchalantly leaning back, blowing his nose!

He took two paces to the end of the plank and looked over. My end of the plank rose and fell violently at each step, and I gripped the top of the ladder grimly.

Then, for some time, I made a pretence of assisting with the work of loosening bricks. Larkins affected not to notice my pallor. Actually the conviction was steadily growing within me that if I once looked down I should fall.

It is difficult to describe the negotiation of that ladder again. For a few awful seconds I hung over the edge of the board, my feet feeling wildly for the rungs of the ladder. Had my hand-hold failed me I should have had no chance at all.

Then I was surprised to find myself on the ladder and descending step by step. Once or twice I paused to rest, but each time I seemed a long, long way from the ground.

Once, my feet slipped entirely from the rungs, and again I had to cling desperately by the hands. After that, numbed with cold and fear combined, I went down almost mechanically, and the journey seemed to take so long that I reached the ground with a little shock.

\* \* \* \* \*

The next unnerving experience to befall me was of a very different kind. A great deal of attention was focused at the time upon salvage operations upon the sunken *Egypt*, and I was detailed to describe the sensations of a deep-sea diver.

In due course, therefore, I was fitted into a diving suit and—with only brief instructions and no former experience—

dropped into a deep tank beside the murky Thames. At least I was able to ease the first part of the descent by following a submerged ladder down the side of the tank.

As my helmet first sank beneath the water, and the light was blotted out, a slight whining noise began beneath my right ear—the sound made by the escaping air. This mingled with the deep coughing noise, the “chump-chump” of the air being pumped down, and there was a sickening taste of rubber.

I had been going down, rung by rung, but suddenly there was no support for my feet. The air in my suit made me partially buoyant, and I did not immediately sink, but hung on with my hands. Then I began to lose my grip, and after a moment let go.

My senses reeled as, fighting for breath, I plunged downward. I do not know how long the descent took, but suddenly I was on the bottom, in a kneeling position, and only half conscious.

I tried to get a grip of myself, but I knew that I was losing my head. “Steady, you fool,” I screamed aloud, and almost fainted completely when a voice answered fiercely, “Oo’s a fool?”

Then I grinned in spite of my discomfort. Of course there was a telephone inside my helmet connected to another diver working farther along the dockside.

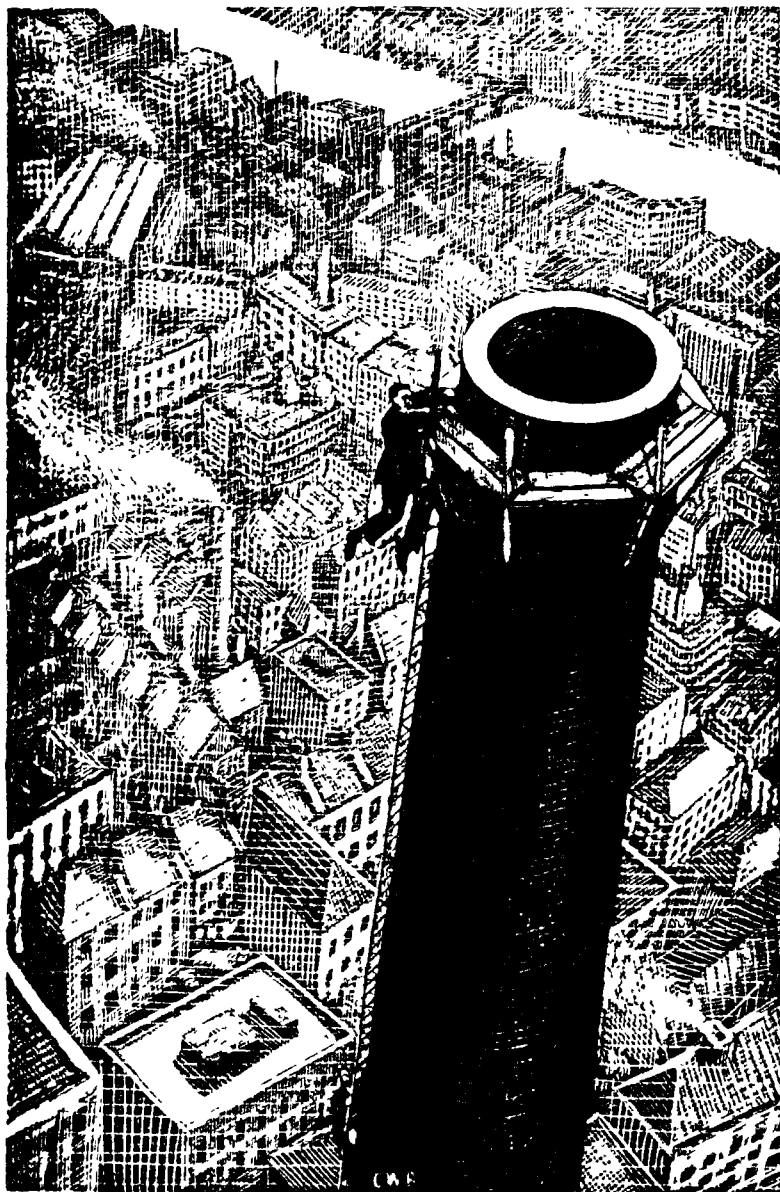
“Say, are you all right?” came his voice, above the noise of incoming and escaping air.

“Yes, I’m all right,” I answered weakly, and he gave a half-satisfied grunt.

I tried to take stock of my surroundings. I had no doubt that I was about fifty feet below the surface of the river. I could see absolutely nothing, but there was an intolerable pain in my chest and head, and I felt very weak. Almost without thinking, I had closed the safety-valve at the side of my helmet as I sank, and now I wondered dully whether I had closed it too much.

I gave it a turn, and next moment found myself flat on my back and quite unable to move. Somehow I had taken a knock on the head, and as I began to think again, I realised that I had let too much air escape. The entire diving apparatus was a dead weight upon me, and the weight of water held me down.

For minutes that seemed like hours, I struggled, inch by inch, to raise an arm, until I felt the milled wheel of the valve



*"For a few awful seconds I hung over the edge of the board."*



in my hand. One turn, two, three, and the air began to fill out my suit again. Now I breathed easier, and as the suit became lighter, I was able to kneel up.

Then I felt a queer sensation. Everything was losing weight and substance. I was on my feet without effort, the suit began ballooning out, and I was floating upwards!

I went down for a moment, put out a foot, and shot up again. This must be the result of too much air, and I thought suddenly of burst blood-vessels and all the other perils. . . .

In looking back on that experience I am convinced that nothing but good luck saved me from injury. It was just another escape. Certainly I spent most of the time under water in a state of extraordinary mental confusion, and anything might have happened before I could summon the state of mind to prevent it.

\* \* \* \* \*

Something similar occurred when I flew over a crowded football ground in one of the earliest types of autogiro, when the sight of the odd-looking 'plane was sufficient to cause a sensation among the mass of people below.

Whether my fellow-pilot was unduly interested in the match, or whether he suffered from some kind of mental lapse which led him to an error of judgment, I never discovered; but to the horror of eighty thousand people our machine skimmed the roof of the grand-stand, with only inches to spare, and dropped still farther on the other side. Fortunately the engine was running perfectly and we were able to clear some adjoining buildings safely.

That unpleasant scare was merely a prelude to a flight with one of the world's greatest stunt pilots. Indeed, the man concerned—Captain Hubert Broad, the de Havilland test pilot—was a war-time ace, and more recently winner of the International Aerobatic Contest. It was his job to take up, and put through the most extraordinary evolutions, machines which had never before left the ground. Just once I shared the risk with him, and this is how I wrote of it at the time:

I settled down comfortably in my seat, closed the little flap of the cockpit, and eyed all the white needles on the dials of the facia. At the moment they were standing at ease and looking very innocent. . . .

The engine crackled and roared into life. The cockpit began to vibrate and then gyrate gently as our machine turned to taxi slowly over the soft ground. I glanced down furtively

at the massive straps that crossed my shoulders and encircled my waist, and then up at the white clouds racing across the sky.

The next moment my head went back with a jerk, and when I recovered sufficiently to look over the side we were up about a thousand feet.

For the next few moments I enjoyed that queer and rather delightful sensation as though there is a mighty hand beneath your seat lifting you bodily several hundred feet at a time, with little pauses in between.

The needle of the altimeter was wandering casually round from two thousand to three thousand and then on to four, while the air-speed indicator showed only 65 or 70 m.p.h.

I looked down at the Welsh Harp, gleaming dully in the winter sunshine like a dirty puddle. And when I looked back those two needles went mad.

At the same moment some tremendous force jammed me into my seat, an icy coldness descended upon me, and I found myself with a perfectly clear view ahead straight into the middle of the aerodrome.

The noise of the engine was deafening, and as I lowered my head I saw that we had swooped down to less than a thousand feet in a matter of seconds, at 300 m.p.h.

And then the aerodrome disappeared, and in its place, for a brief moment, was a beautiful expanse of clear sky. But still I was pressed horribly, painfully, into my place and the sky went right over, and the horizon appeared from the wrong direction.

And now, to my horror, I found that the straps that had been tight on the ground were loose—so loose that I could move my shoulders in them. That was because I slipped down a little in my seat on that loop—but the thought flashed into my mind that I was in danger of falling from the cockpit when we went over again.

I hoped fearfully that the straps would not get any looser, for I had no means of informing the pilot of my plight. Meanwhile I wedged myself very erect and tight once more, bracing my legs beneath the seat.

We were climbing again, now, in quite tremendous leaps, and soon we were up to four thousand feet, where wisps of cotton-wool went sailing by. And then that aeroplane turned over on to the tip of one wing and started to fly round it, while all the ground below went sailing around in rapidly growing circles.

Straightening from the spin we flew on for as much as a

minute without anything happening. And then the wing that had been down before came over until it changed places with the other one, while the entire arrangement of earth and sky performed the same remarkable evolution.

Above me was the earth, and at my feet were the clouds, while for a second or two my entire weight depended upon the straps over my shoulders. Still, everything straightened itself out and I found myself quite astonishingly in the same position as I started.

Now, though, my head was swimming a little, and there was a certain vagueness about the horizon.

Jove, it was cold ! And every time I saw over the front of the cockpit it felt colder still.

We went up a little higher, then. As I had lost faith in the altimeter I can only guess at about five thousand feet. Then the 'plane lay down on its side and slithered back towards the ground in one glorious, ghastly sideslip.

The slipstream, deflected into the cockpit by our sideways progress, came searing its way through my clothing, leaving me frozen to the bone. And the roar of the engine was multiplied, and seemed to take pleasure in tormenting me.

I do not remember all the details of that extremely interesting flight. There were times when my vision was reduced to a hopeless confusion of clouds and instruments and wings and fields, until I half believed that I had long since fallen out of the plane altogether. And then the machine would suddenly settle on to an even keel, with one very rigid wing to starboard and another to port. And back would come my sense of reality and, more important, my sense of direction. Very reassuring.

The next time we began a long climb to a considerable height I recognised the overture to a new horror, and, with great cunning, prepared for the worst.

Up and up, and then, quite suddenly, over. The horizon dropped away below, and the order of things, as before, was reversed. My weight went slumping down on to my shoulders, and I braced my knees against the side of the cockpit.

The straps felt horribly loose, so that I swayed a little in them, and I was assailed by a sickening dread. But worse was to come, for this time we did not go over—we stayed upside-down, while half the suburbs of London passed away beneath my horrified gaze.

The pressure on the straps keeping me in was terrific. My knees lost their grip, my helmet tried to come off, too, and its strap nearly choked me.



I must have been a revolting sight, suspended in mid-air like a trussed chicken.

Red spots appeared before my eyes and danced about crazily. My tongue clave to the roof of my mouth, and I imagined my eyes were falling out. I do not know how long that lasted. Probably only a minute. Though it seemed so long that every fraction of a second provided enough material for a book.

I can remember seeing a train crawling across that green and brown ceiling, and thinking how fortunate for the passengers that they were not upside-down, too. And there was a lake, with a white arrow upon it. "Ah, I know," I said to myself, "a motor-boat."

Then to my astonishment the motor-boat leapt out of the lake and hung on behind the train, which immediately turned round and plunged into the lake. Yet when next I looked over the side, there was no ground to be seen, only cloud. Let alone lakes and boats and trains.

Really it is very difficult in this moment to extricate fact from fantasy, to distinguish between observation and imagination.

I had never before plunged down two or three thousand feet in a matter of seconds, so I am not surprised that the picture I have in my mind of crashing into the ground is as vivid as that other one of swooping upwards again into the sky.

Every time the machine righted itself, every time my sense of balance was restored, I became conscious of a curious exultation, as though by great good fortune I had survived a brush with death.

\* \* \* \* \*

In reciting a series of experiences of this kind it would be simple to fall into the mistake of giving a false impression of myself. Perhaps I may explain at this juncture that, generally, I was thoroughly scared. The only time I was not afraid was when I was not conscious of the actual danger.

I mean, I hated being crushed into a diving-suit and dropped into forty or fifty feet of water, but I was not *afraid* in the old, familiar way. The whole thing was interesting, exciting, and I knew that if anything serious happened I had a reasonable chance of being hauled to the surface safely.

Even when I made a mistake with the air-valve, and nearly drowned myself, I was reassured by a voice on the telephone.

Mind you, I had a splitting headache—did I mention that

before?—there was a **pain** like a bayonet through my chest and I had to fight for breath. But that voice made all the difference.

It was all quite, quite different the first time I climbed out on to the wing of an aeroplane, knowing that within a minute or two my life would depend upon a dozen slender threads and a few yards of silk. My first parachute drop—and very nearly my last.

I shall never forget the horror and foreboding with which I contemplated that brief experience. I had taken off from Reading aerodrome, closely pursued by two other machines containing photographers. My pilot believed that he knew the precise spot for me to drop off, so that I should land in the flying field. He climbed in a wide circle while I, sitting in the forward cockpit, passed my hands again and again over the parachute harness.

At two thousand feet we swung back in our course, followed by the other machines, one a little above and the other below us. A few moments brought the aerodrome into view through the light clouds, and I looked round expectantly at the pilot. He returned my glance for perhaps five seconds, and then nodded slowly.

The effect of that nod upon me was remarkable. My blood-pressure seemed to increase about a hundred per cent., and a faint dryness came into my throat. For a brief moment I sat in my seat and, I confess it, shuddered.

Then, stiffly, I stood up, and received a violent blow in the face from the tremendous force of the wind.

I was flying without goggles and, the breath beaten from my body, half blinded and quite bruised about the face, I fumbled for the catches which held the little door of the cockpit and drew them back.

The door slipped down, and I climbed with difficulty—consider the weight of the parachute and the immense wind resistance it offered—out on to the wing.

The next stage of the operations was one of the most difficult. While I stood immediately opposite my own cockpit I could hold on to two struts, one with each hand. In order, however, to reach the rear of the wing, I had to change hands and cross over a lower wing cross-member.

I shall never know how I accomplished this. Deafened, half blinded, fighting for breath, frozen to the bone, I moved one foot after another, inch by inch, slowly, laboriously, painfully. The edges of the struts to which I was holding cut into my bare, cold fingers.

In perhaps three minutes, or a little more, I found myself alongside the rear cockpit, from which the pilot watched me gravely through his goggles.

I took a new grip of the strut with my right hand, and with my left grasped the rip-cord ring of the parachute.

So hanging on perilously by one hand and one foot, at one hundred miles an hour, exposed to the fierce slipstream along the fuselage of the machine, I knew I could not remain there more than a few seconds. If I did not jump I should get blown off.

I caught the pilot's eye and drawing a deep breath, nodded. He nodded in return, and momentarily held the plane. As his engine slowed down to a feeble splutter, he leaned over the side.

"Right!" he shouted; "good luck!"

I turned my face to the distant ground, let go the strut and jumped.

The next instant is a brief gap in my life which I shall never be able to fill in. I remember turning slowly head over heels though, while a mighty wind jostled me violently. The plane had disappeared, utterly and completely.

I had no sensation of falling in the ordinary sense. It felt rather as though my extremities were trying to fly off at angles from my body.

In those four or five seconds I fell several hundred feet, but I did not suffer any serious discomfort. I remember thinking, "I must be well clear of the machine by now," and with that I pulled the rip cord.

The ring came away easily in my hand, and a second later there was a sound like washing being shaken very vigorously. My progress ceased to be meteoric—as though a great hand had reached down and arrested my flight—and I found myself floating gently in mid-air.

"This," I thought, as the world drifted lazily beneath me and the sun broke momentarily through the clouds, "is distinctly pleasant."

And I waved to the pilot of one of the other planes which was swooping in circles and following me towards the ground.

For a very brief time I thoroughly enjoyed the sensation of descending by parachute. Then I passed through another small bank of clouds and discovered, to my consternation, that the aerodrome was nowhere in view. Moreover, I was travelling backwards and partly to one side, while a bewildering succession of woods and valleys, roads and fields, cottages and farms, hurried beneath me.

The thought that I could not see where I should strike the earth, crossed my mind, and I strove desperately to turn in my seat. Suddenly there appeared the dull grey outline of the Thames, and I realised the danger of falling into the water. The envelope of the parachute would "blanket" over me and defeat any attempt I might make to reach the bank. I should be imprisoned, helpless, and certainly drowned.

My one hope was to reach the other side. The wind was too strong for me to land this side of the river, and the danger lay in a row of tall trees on the opposite side.

There was nothing I could do. I hung in mid-air while the river slid beneath me, and the trees beyond rushed up to reach me. At the last moment I strove to avoid them, but in vain.

My feet struck the upper foliage lightly enough, but as I plunged downwards my fall was abruptly broken by the branches. For a few moments I dropped in short, jerky stages, and the canvas of the parachute dragged after me. And then suddenly everything gave way, and I saw the ground a full thirty feet below. Before I could act or think, it had rushed up to meet me, and I landed full on my two feet on the side of a grassy bank.

Somehow, very swiftly, I had a sensation of relief. But this was indeed short-lived. The shock of hitting the earth was terrific, and my body was jolted from head to heels. There came a sound like cracking twigs from my legs, and I collapsed on the wet grass, almost fainting with pain.

When my head cleared I saw, with one glance—because my foot hung limp—that I had broken my left leg, while the pain in my right leg assured me of some injury.

I will not dwell upon that incident. It remains that I did not walk again for six months, although I took the opportunity of flying again within a few weeks. Yet, in looking back and considering all the circumstances, I was fortunate not to have been killed, not once, but several times.

And there's a thrill in the mere knowledge that you have risked your life—and escaped.

# THE COMING OF THE TIGER

By

JAMES S. LEE

*In the year 1894, Mr. Lee, then twenty-two years of age, became mechanical engineer in a mining settlement on the north-east frontier of India. Here he tells one of the many exciting adventures that befell him.*

I WAS in grand form ; I found life very interesting, for there was plenty of variety here.

I have seen a man-eater, a tiger. Not only that, but I have smelt its foul breath on my face, and have almost felt its claws when reaching for me, within a few inches of my body. Yet I am still alive, but the memory of it will live with me for ever. Those hours of fear were torture far more acute than any pain ; a mental torture which I never before realised was possible to be produced by fear. Yes, believe me, fear can be more agonising than bodily pain.

I was sleeping in my bed when I was awakened in the early hours of the morning by a coolie standing under my window, calling, " Sahib ! Sahib ! "

As soon as I awakened, I got up and went to the open window—a window which contained no glass ; only a wooden-louvred shutter.

" Sahib, *harkul bund hai*," said the coolie, meaning, " The fan has stopped."

This was a very serious matter. I knew that there were more than a hundred men and women working underground on the night shift, and soon the air underground would be unbreathable, and work would have to stop. The fan must be got going at once. I got up and dressed quickly, meanwhile sending the coolie for one of my fitters, who had a hut just below my compound.

Luckai, the fitter, an old man something like an Egyptian mummy in appearance, came up to my compound, carrying a hurricane lamp and a large pipe wrench, while the coolie fireman followed carrying some tools.

It was no joke, really, for we had to walk about half a mile through the jungle before we got to the fan, which was situated in an isolated spot, right in the heart of the jungle, and high up the hillside.

I was always scared on this trip at night-time, and I had made it a few times under similar conditions ; the fan had a habit of stopping sometimes at night. It might be the feed pump of the boiler which had gone wrong, or perhaps the coolie had allowed the water to get out of sight in the gauge glass, when he would get scared, draw the fire, and come down for a fitter.

I was scared because the jungle was known to be infested by tigers and leopards, and many natives had been killed at one time or another in the district.

As we walked along the winding path up the side of the hill, with thick jungle on either side, the old man was fairly trembling, and muttering to himself : "*Khun roj Bargh kyh-ager*," which means literally, "Some day tiger eat."

The coolie was the only one of us who appeared not to be afraid, but then perhaps he had no imagination ; he was a poor specimen of humanity ; naked, with the exception of a loin-cloth, and coal black, with spindle legs and big feet ; and his face and arms were covered with syphilitic sores.

I could certainly have taken my rifle with me, but it would not have been much protection at night-time.

A tiger could spring out on us before I could use it, or a leopard could jump down on us out of a tree as we passed underneath ; besides, I knew that I would come in for a good deal of chaff from the other Europeans. I carried a hunting knife only.

Although I reckoned that the chances of us meeting a tiger were about 100 to 1 against, this did not seem to help much.

Arrived at the spot I proceeded to investigate.

The place was a levelled and cleared portion of the hillside towering above us. Here there was a horizontal engine and a large vertical boiler, standing on a massive concrete foundation, and driving, by means of a leather belt, the fan, which was built in the hillside. In front of me the jungle sloped away steeply down to the valley below.

The boiler fire was out, and the steam had fallen to a few

pounds pressure, and steam and water were leaking into the furnace.

I knew that there was a tube leaking, probably the uptake tube. It was a very old boiler and all I could do was to make a temporary repair.

Leaving Lukai and the coolie to blow off the water and take off the manhole cover, I proceeded down the hill by a different route to the mine entrance, to see the foreman miner, and tell him to withdraw the coolies; the repair would take the rest of the night to make.

By the time I got back, I found that they had got the water blown off, and the manhole opened, leaving an opening into the boiler several feet above the ground.

They had a ladder placed against the boiler, and Lukai was on the domed roof, taking off the chimney, while the coolie was down below raking out the ashes, and taking out the fire-bars, so that I could stand upright when inside the furnace. The interior was still hot, so we started to partly fill the boiler with cold water as high as the furnace crown, on which we would have to stand when inside the steam space.

Although we had thrown buckets of cold water all round inside the furnace door, the interior was also fairly hot and stifling when I crept inside with a small lamp.

Meanwhile Lukai got into the boiler through the manhole overhead, and between us we located the leak. As I expected, it was a small leak through the uptake tube. It had worn thin just there. Really it was dangerous, but as it would take a week to get another boiler up, and we could not stop the mine working, I had to patch it up as quickly as I could.

I next got in the manhole beside Lukai, and while he held the lamp, I punched a round chisel or drift through the leak until I had made a round hole large enough for a half-inch bolt to pass through.

This done, we got outside and found two pieces of plate of about two inches square, with a hole through the centre of each, for the bolt to pass through. These plates or washers were slightly curved, so as to fit the tube.

Wrapping the neck of the bolt with spunyarn, and covering it with red and white lead, I threaded on a plate, first passing the second piece of plate up to Lukai, who had climbed into the manhole.

Again getting inside the firedoor, I reached up the tube, and pushed the bolt through the hole, until the plate, well-covered with lead and spunyarn, was pressing firmly against the tube.

Lukai now threaded his piece of plate on to the bolt from the other side of the tube, first well leading and wrapping it; and all that now required to be done, was for him to put on the nut and tighten up, so that the leak would be tightly gripped by the plates, inside and outside.

Just then I heard the coolie scream, and saw his legs and feet scampering up the ladder.

He was now on top of the boiler shouting, "*Bargh*" ("tiger").

The sudden realisation of my position now struck me for the first time. I was trapped like a rat in a trap. I was on the ground level, and there was an open hole into the chamber.

Could the tiger reach me with its claws, through the open door? I felt that it could, and I knew then real fear, such as few people ever experience.

Thoughts raced through my brain, quickly following one another. I thought of our relative positions.

The coolie was on top of the boiler, high up out of reach of the tiger, and therefore safe. Lukai was inside the boiler, and the only opening into this part was the manhole, and this was several feet above the ground. He was fairly safe I thought, because the tiger could not climb up the smooth steel side. My position was the only one which was dangerous. I could now hear it moving about outside, and once or twice I caught a glimpse of its stripes, as it passed the door opening, because the night was not dark, the stars were shining above us.

The creature evidently had not yet discovered my presence, and was concentrating its attention on the coolie above.

It moved in silence, and both Lukai and the coolie were now silent.

Suddenly, with a terrible snarl, it sprang upwards, and I could hear its claws rasping on the steel plate as it slipped back. Its rage and snarls were now horrible, and all the time I was pressing myself back against the far side of the boiler as hard as I could.

Could it reach me when it discovered my presence?

I measured the distance with my eye, and I felt more hopeful.

Suddenly the snarling stopped, and I saw its head at the opening. It had found me.

First it tried to force itself through the door, but it could only get its head through, and its fangs soon were snapping within a couple of feet of my body. Its breath came in horrid, foul gusts, filling the chamber with a sickening odour, and its



roars inside the confined space were enough to hurt my ear drums, while its eyes were glaring into mine.

I stood there fascinated with horror.

I now knew that it could not reach me that way, but would it start reaching in with its claws? My imagination now began to visualise its claws reaching me, and speculating as to what part of me it would rip up first. The constriction on my heart had almost become like a physical pain. Just then I heard something strike the boiler plate with a loud clang. Lukai had thrown his hammer. Of course. How foolish of me! I had forgotten my hunting knife, which was in my belt. I would wait until it put its head in again, and then try and jab the blade through its eye into the brain.

Now it was reaching for me with its paw through the door opening, and its claws came within a few inches of my body, opening and shutting in a horrible manner. It could not reach me, but I knew that if it had the intelligence of a human being, it would reach in sideways, and then all would soon be over.

It was too dangerous to try and slash its paw, besides, it would do little good. I would wait.

Again it had got its head in the opening and I raised my knife, but found that its teeth followed my hand, and it was risky to strike, because it was snapping all the time. Its top lip was lifted, exposing fangs which seemed enormous, and its whiskers were trembling with rage.

Then I struck with all the suddenness I was capable of. I had missed, and the knife only slashed down its nose, because its head had moved.

Quickly the tiger backed out with a roar. Its rage now was so terrible that it even bit at the plate of the door opening. It was behaving outside like a rampaging demon; lashing its tail and sometimes springing up at the coolie, who had now recovered his courage when he found himself beyond reach. Both he and Lukai were spitting and hissing and hurling abuse at it.

Once on its upward spring it got its paw in the manhole door opening and hung there a minute while the rest of its claws were slipping and rasping on the steel plates of the boiler side. Then Lukai brought his spanner down with all his force on its paw, nearly cutting it through on the sharp edge of the door opening.

Now the creature was almost insane with rage. It had first been hit by Lukai on the back with a hammer, then its nose

had been split by my knife, and lastly its paw had been nearly cut off by the last blow.

Presently it put its head in the fire door again, and, following Lukai's example, I struck it a heavy blow on the nose with my large hammer.

Now a tiger's nose is a very tender and sensitive spot, and it is intended to be so, because its whiskers have to guide it through the thick undergrowth in the dark, and it feels the touch of any obstruction first through these, and then through its nose ; consequently the pain must have been extremely acute, judging by the noise it made. It then bounded off into the jungle.

However, none of us ventured to leave our refuge before it was broad daylight, and in the meantime we completed the work.

# ESCAPE FROM A GERMAN PRISON CAMP

By

DUNCAN GRINNELL-MILNE

*On December 1st 1915, Captain Grinnell-Milne of the R.A.F. made a forced landing with his plane on fire on enemy territory, and he and his observer, Captain Strong, were taken prisoners by the Germans. For two-and-a-half years, Captain Grinnell-Milne was moved from one prison camp to another, trying all the time to effect his escape. His last effort, where his story opens now, took place in March 1918 at Neunkirchen*

AT the beginning of March several of the older prisoners were told that their turn for exchange to Holland was drawing near. Most of them, being old prisoners of the retreat from Mons, were naturally very pleased at the prospect, but one or two who were keen on escaping wondered whether they had better not refuse to go. The conditions of the exchange were certainly very tempting, for within the limits of certain towns ex-prisoners were allowed to live in complete freedom and to do exactly as they pleased. The great disadvantage lay in the fact that, by the terms of the agreement between England, Holland, and Germany, prisoners once in Holland would stay there until the end of the war, being expressly forbidden by their respective Governments to make any attempt to escape.

A farewell banquet was arranged as a send-off to the first party from Neunkirchen, and shortly afterwards the names of the second batch were announced. McClean found himself among these and made up his mind not to go. He informed the Germans of his decision, but he was told that his name being on the official list he would have to go as far as Aachen, the camp to which prisoners were taken on their way to Holland, in order to satisfy the authorities of his definite refusal. He

still determined to escape some day and it was just possible that at Aachen he would find a chance. On leaving McClean took with him an excellent assortment of escaping necessities, and we watched his departure with interest, hoping that the next time a party left for Aachen one of us might be smuggled out in a large wicker basket such as some of the prisoners used for packing their belongings.

Three days later, like the dove to Mount Ararat, McClean returned to Neunkirchen. He reported that escape from the camp did not seem to be very difficult but that it would require time to work out the details. Owing to his having been sent back a day sooner than he had expected, he had been unable to accomplish his purpose, but he was able to give us a rough plan of the camp, together with its exact position on the south-west side of the town of Aachen. He also brought us news of one or two other prisoners who had likewise refused to be exchanged to Holland.

A week or two elapsed and then the Germans published yet another list of prisoners who were to be prepared to leave for Aachen at a moment's notice. This time the list included Collier, Wilkin, and myself. Collier was inclined to accept, but Wilkin and I were firm in our belief that we still stood a reasonable chance of escaping successfully, and consequently refused. Thinking that the authorities would have benefited by McClean's case, we imagined that we should not be sent even as far as Aachen and put the matter completely out of our minds. Rumours that we were soon to be transferred to another camp were becoming more frequent, and to hasten this move we continued making a series of written protests to the Germans, dealing chiefly with the unhealthiness of the camp. I also put in my usual application to be allowed to rejoin my brother. I felt so certain I would not be sent to Aachen that I even wrote home asking for more escaping kit to be sent out, and for all parcels to be sent to Holzminden, my brother's camp.

One morning, to our surprise, the Germans announced that the authorities in Berlin had decided we must go as far as Aachen, so that there should be absolutely no doubt of our refusal to go to Holland. They were apparently worried lest they should be accused by the Allied Governments of keeping prisoners back. This decision put the whole matter of escaping on a totally different footing and we accordingly revised our plans.

I was not to leave Neunkirchen, however, without once more getting into trouble with the authorities. A fortnight before our departure we were examined by a German doctor who had to certify that all prisoners were free from disease before entering Holland. The examination took a very long time and we were ordered to strip completely naked in front of the most unpleasant specimen of the German medical profession it has ever been my misfortune to set eyes on. I informed the doctor that as I was not going to Holland the examination was quite unnecessary in my case, and that I did not intend to strip. After a short argument he lost his temper, sent for some guards and had me arrested. The commandant, while expressing much sympathy, was forced to award me seven days in jail. This time instead of being sent out of the camp to the prison, I was locked in one of the empty rooms at the top of the house. I spent a pleasant week there, putting the finishing touches to a forged passport and practising picking and unpicking the lock of my room with a bent fork. Every evening, having picked the lock, I went downstairs, had a glass of beer, and listened to the camp gossip. By ten o'clock, when the Germans went on their rounds, I was upstairs again and had relocked my door for the night.

A week after my release the time came for our departure. We had arranged to take a large stock of escaping kit so that, should we be unable to escape from Aachen and not be sent back to Neunkirchen, we would be fully equipped in the next camp. It was by no means easy to hide so many things, and the news that we were to undergo a strict search before leaving the camp gave us cause for anxiety. On entering the *Kommandantur*, we found that our fears were justified when we were told to take off the greater part of our clothing and unpack our luggage. Wilkin and I made some excuse and hurried back to the dormitory where we got rid of the bulkier and least necessary of our possessions. After that the search passed off satisfactorily and nothing was found. I had with me a compass, a map of Aachen and the Dutch frontier, two or three hundred marks of German money, a forged permit to travel, and a moderately good felt hat sewn into the lining of my coat in such a way as to be practically unnoticeable unless the coat was ripped open. Fortunately we were not completely stripped, as the pass and some of the money were in a canvas belt tied tightly around my waist.

We got into the train at Neunkirchen at nine o'clock in the morning and, travelling all day long through the picturesque

Rhineland, reached Cologne without incident at about eleven that night. We had to change trains here, and there was a wait of over an hour. Here again we were taken into the underground waiting-room, where we found numerous other prisoners from different camps also on their way to Aachen. High up on the whitewashed wall of this temporary prison, I found my name with the date "December 8th, 1915!" Beneath it I added "April 16th, 1918." Nearly two years and a half—perhaps I had a premonition of victory, but somehow those dates seemed to look like the beginning and the end.

The train for Aachen arrived just after midnight and our party, now nearly a hundred strong, was soon packed in. Wilkin and I had entertained high hopes of leaving the train before we reached our destination. But, notwithstanding a dark night and a scarcity of guards, the train maintained far too high a speed for any attempt to be made with safety.

We reached Aachen at half-past one in the morning, and marched through the dark deserted streets towards the east side of the town. It was quite clear that we were not going to the camp described by McClean, and our hopes fell. Both Wilkin and I talked over the possibility of bolting down a side street during the march, but the guards were numerous enough to be able to give chase without weakening the main body, and we were also quite ignorant of the topography of the town.

Upon arriving at the camp we were all interviewed by the authorities, and particulars were taken down and compared with a list supplied from Berlin. When my turn came I told them of my determination to stop in Germany and not to be exchanged; Wilkin did the same. The Germans were much amused, as they fancied we preferred the delightful prison life we had been leading to the freedom of Holland. But they told us we should have to stay another night in Aachen before they could get permission from Berlin to send us back.

This only gave us the next day to decide on a plan of escape, and the next night to carry it out. It was difficult to believe that we should be able to find a sure method, but we began to investigate the camp at once. We were not allowed out of the building till the morning, and we had to content ourselves with making a rough survey from the inside before we went to bed.

We found that the place we were in was only one half of the whole building; the other half being used as a hospital for German wounded. There was apparently no communication between the two halves, for we could see several bricked-up doorways on the first and second floors. Moreover, when

we had been brought in, we had come through the main entrance of the German hospital out into the courtyard at the back, then through a gateway into another yard, and finally by a side door into our own part of the building. One side of the camp was bounded by a main road, and the remaining two sides by the usual wooden palisade and barbed-wire, enclosing a small exercise yard. The hospital section possessed a similar yard for the use of the German wounded, and was surrounded by a tall barbed-wire fence. The two yards were separated by a wall, in which was the gateway we had recently passed through, and by an iron-roofed brick shed. Next day we discovered that this shed contained the camp lavatories, both for the prisoners and the hospital inmates.

From the top floor we counted the sentries and estimated how large an area the arc-lamps illuminated. We could see that the camp was well defended, particularly owing to the proximity of the hospital and the houses in the street. We were actually inside the town but near the outskirts, and there were fields in front of the camp. In the distance, a few miles to the north, we could dimly make out a line of hills which we knew must overlook the Dutch frontier. The thought that we were so close made us doubly keen. I felt very excited and remember saying to Wilkin as we watched from the window :

"There, ahead of us, lies the frontier we have been trying to get a glimpse of since 1915. By hook or by crook we have got to get away to-morrow night !"

Next morning several batches of prisoners due for exchange came in ; among them were Strong, my one-time observer, and Beverley Robinson, who had been at Holzminden since leaving Ströhen. Robinson had also refused the exchange to Holland, and hearing that Wilkin and I were doing likewise, offered his help if we attempted to escape. We gave him a rough idea of our plans and he asked if he might follow us if the scheme were successful. He had brought some sort of kit with him, including a compass and a felt hat, and we therefore agreed to his making a third.

The rest of the morning we spent in walking round the yard, examining the wire and the positions of the sentries, and searching for a safe way out. Our escape would have to be made without any preparation, owing to the short time at our disposal ; it was useless to think of anything like bluffing our way out as German officers, or even workmen, for we had none of the necessary kit and no knowledge of the regular routine of the place. We had to make sure that we got away

without being noticed, because once the alarm was raised it would be easy for the Germans, with the frontier only a few miles distant, to patrol every yard of the sector we were likely to cross. For the same reason, since we were certain to be missed early the next morning, it was essential to cross the frontier the same night, and therefore an early start was necessary.

Scheme after scheme was suggested and thrown aside as impracticable, and we were driven to the conclusion that the only possible way out was to get somehow into the hospital yard, which was not so well guarded and less brilliantly illuminated. With only one barbed-wire fence to cross, it seemed probable that once there we should be able to get safely into the open. The problem was how to cross the wall. It was fairly well lighted and several sentries would be able to see it clearly. The lavatories on our side had no communication with those on the German side—at least if there had ever been a door, it was bricked up now. The gate in the wall was of no use; it was locked and there was a sentry on duty near it.

Almost in despair we made another inspection of the lavatories, and this time we noticed something that had previously escaped our attention. Twelve feet from the ground there were two ventilation holes, each less than two feet square, piercing the wall and evidently leading into the hospital lavatories. Both these holes were wired up, but in one of them the strands were loose and widely spread leaving enough space for us to squeeze through. The question as to what we should do on the other side was still unsettled, but at any rate we knew how to get there.

We went indoors and up to the top floor where we could watch the other yard, and notice how many Germans were using their lavatories. We found that while there was only one exit from our lavatories, there were three on the hospital side and one of them close to the wire. The wire fence was about six feet high and fairly closely woven, but we thought we could climb it in the dark. We could only see two sentries, one outside the wire and one in the yard. They were probably meant to guard against possible deserters from the hospital, but they might easily give us trouble as well. We learnt from prisoners who had arrived before us, that the yard was closed for the night at a quarter to ten, and it was not dark till nine-fifteen—so there would not be much margin of time for our escape.



We worked out our scheme again in the afternoon, and made another careful survey of the camp to see if we could find anything better, but there seemed to be nothing else. We collected the small amount of kit we had, and decided what to wear and what to take in the way of food.

I had still with me a moderately good map, some money, a forged pass, a small compass, and a felt hat. I was wearing grey flannel trousers, and my khaki coat had ordinary bone buttons and no badges of any sort, so that in the dark I might well pass for a workman. Wilkin was similarly equipped, and we managed to get him a felt hat from another prisoner who was going to Holland. Chocolate and a few biscuits were all we needed for provisions; we intended to breakfast across the frontier on the following morning.

As soon as it began to get dark, we again posted ourselves at a window and watched the hospital yard. At first there seemed to be an awful crowd; but gradually it thinned out, and by half-past nine there were only a few men left in the whole place. We got ready and went out. There were still many prisoners about and it was fortunate that it was so, for a sentry was already standing near the shed telling every one it was time to go into the main building.

As soon as we got to the shed, I went straight in while Wilkin watched the sentry from the doorway. The ventilation hole was almost in line with the doorway and could be seen from it, as the partition screening the toilet was only some seven feet high. At that moment the sentry put his head in at the door and said something about making haste. We replied with unintentional humour that we would be out in a minute, and the instant he had his back turned I slipped into one of the toilets. With the aid of a wooden partition and some water pipes I climbed up to a small cistern, and standing on it reached the hole, pulled up and pushed through. I let myself down on the far side and found the corresponding cistern with my feet. Looking back through the hole I saw that Robinson had followed me and was already climbing up, while Wilkin was still near the door watching the sentry, and—as he told me afterwards—the sentry was watching him. I waited a few seconds, but there was no time to be lost; at any moment we might be discovered.

We let ourselves down cautiously from the cistern. On this side the lavatories were almost pitch dark, and not meeting any Germans we tiptoed to the doorway and looked out; no one was in sight. A few paces forward we reached the fence.

We made a hasty inspection of the wire ; there was a small open drain running out at this point, and we found just enough room to crawl through. As we scrambled out I spotted the sentry in the German yard barely fifteen yards away, and even closer on the other side I could see one of the camp sentries ; fortunately both had their backs turned. We crawled slowly for twenty yards, and then, getting into the shadow of a low hedge leading away from the camp, stood up and ran. A hundred yards farther on we reached another field with a taller hedge screening us completely from the sentries. Looking back I could see the window from which, only five minutes ago, we had been watching the Germans and discussing our chances. Except that Wilkin was not with us, everything was going well, and there were no signs of pursuit.

But we nearly had trouble within the next two minutes. We had crossed the field diagonally, making for a road on the far side. To get there we had to climb over a barbed-wire fence and pass close to a lamp-post standing in front of a row of houses. As luck would have it I caught my trousers on the fence, and in my haste to get unhooked tore a strip six inches long out of the seat. A party of two men, a woman and a boy, who were passing the lamp at this moment, glanced round, then stopped and stared at us. For a minute it looked as though they were going to come and question us, which would have been very awkward as Robinson could not speak German. But by talking loudly in German I made it seem that we were perfectly ordinary, though rather rough, young men on our way home.

"*Donnerwetter*," I said, " it is most annoying to tear one's trousers ; but no matter, we shall soon be home now."

Robinson mumbled a bit, and said "*Ja wohl*" once or twice ; the Germans stood still and did nothing. They were still staring when we turned the corner and disappeared from their gaze.

We passed between the houses and turned into a lane which we had just been able to see from the camp, and which appeared to lead clear of the town. For a quarter of an hour we followed this track, and then had again to dodge houses and factories. The country to the north-east of Aachen is thickly populated, and dotted with mines and blast-furnaces ; in between the industrial patches it is hilly and wooded. To keep on a definite course by night with an inaccurate map was well-nigh impossible, and the difficulty of the situation was increased by the detours we were forced to make round all the

numerous villages. At times we were scared by the glow from one of the furnaces, suddenly lighting up the whole countryside and giving us an unpleasant feeling of insecurity—as though we were being held in the beam of a searchlight.

For the first two hours we headed north-east, and then gradually turned until we were facing north. We came to better country and our pace increased, but we had wasted a lot of time getting clear of Aachen and its suburbs. Although it was a dark night and raining slightly, we soon noticed how clearly white houses or white posts showed up, and wondered how much could be seen of us. Our faces were easy to cover up with our woollen mufflers, but we found that, through several bad tears in our trousers, our knees were showing and could be seen some way off; our hands were almost as bad. The only remedy seemed to be to rub earth on all the places that were noticeable, so we sat down in a corner of a ploughed field and plastered ourselves with mud. It was unpleasant and messy, but it rendered us almost invisible and we went on more confidently.

We got lost several times in a perfect maze of hills, rivers, and woods, often made worse by the discovery of roads and railways not marked on our map. On these occasions we kept on a rough compass course, and the later it grew the straighter our course became, as there was less risk from villages and farms whose occupants had long since gone to bed. There seemed to be fewer dogs about than usual in Germany; we expected trouble with them as we came nearer to the frontier, but we had practically none. Our chief source of worry was the large number of small industrial settlements evidently constructed since the date of issue of our map. We were often forced to walk straight through such places and we were very fortunate in not meeting many people.

At half-past two we lost all confidence in the map, which after leading us to a correctly marked road suddenly brought us to a railway line, a brightly illuminated mine, and then a river broad enough to make us look for a bridge. None of these features were shown on the map, and we wondered what we should do on the frontier. I began to lose confidence in our chances of success; in fact, when we had made an almost complete circle round the mine and its neighbouring buildings and found ourselves heading due south, I was on the verge of despair. But within half an hour the country flattened out and we came across several landmarks which, with some lights we could see to the north, convinced us that we were close to

the small town of Kohlscheid, itself only two miles from the nearest point of the frontier.

We blundered into the southern outskirts, and were only saved from passing right through the place by discovering a main road with tramlines and seeing the station lights just ahead. Had we missed Kohlscheid we might easily have continued due north and run into the thickly populated and probably strongly guarded area of Kohlberg. Turning due west we found a stream and followed it to the main railway line from Aachen. We waited while a goods train passed slowly by and then crossed the line, picking up the stream on the far side. The lights of Kohlscheid station shone not five hundred yards to the right, and to our left a row of houses showed up faintly, indicating the position of the village of Bank.

From now on we were in the frontier zone and great caution was essential. Under normal circumstances it was an understood thing that one went dead slow in this zone, and for the last two miles it was considered best to crawl on hands and knees, taking advantage of every scrap of cover. In our case this was out of the question; it was already half-past three and we estimated that to reach the point where we intended to cross the frontier, we had another four miles in front of us. Dawn would come between five and half-past and by that time we wanted to be more than a mile across the border; bearing in mind the uncertainty of its exact position, we had over five miles to do in less than two hours. Slow going was not to be thought of, and heading north-west we pushed on at a good three miles an hour.

Our route took us through open rolling country, with large ploughed fields, making concealment difficult but allowing us to see and avoid houses, villages, and woods (which might contain guards) before getting dangerously near to them. We felt, too, that where we could not hide at any rate there was no chance of a sentry being concealed, and we made no noise in the open fields, whereas in a wood we should have been cracking twigs the whole time. Every now and then we stopped to listen for any sounds of voices or footsteps, and to take fresh bearings with the compass. Occasionally lying flat on the ground we scanned the dark grey skyline, hoping to see ahead of time any unusual movement that might betray the presence of a sentry. In this way we covered about two miles without any difficulty, and the only obstacles we encountered were the stream, which we recrossed, and a farmhouse. As we got nearer, we could see more lights some miles to the

north, though whether this was another German village or actually one across the frontier we could not tell. One especially bright light shone out above the others and was very useful as a bearing-point. For a short time we headed towards these lights, but we were brought to a full stop by another farmhouse from which a sound of voices was coming, and what seemed to be the clicking of rifle-bolts. Then we fancied we could discern the figure of a sentry near the house, and hurriedly turning back we made a wide detour to the west and lost sight of the place without raising the alarm. By this time it was past four-thirty and it seemed almost certain that we were within two miles of the frontier.

There was not much time to spare. Our map was very vague as to the precise line of the frontier in this neighbourhood, but there was one certain indication of having crossed it: about a mile and a half across the border and parallel to it, there ran a line of railway. To be quite sure of success, we had to reach this line before dawn. And already the eastern horizon was giving a pale warning of the approach of day. Within an hour it would be light.

A mile past the farmhouse where we had heard voices, we reached a small patch of wood bounded by barbed-wire, and beyond it what appeared to be a much larger wood. We skirted the former, not trying to enter it as it was apparently crossed by several wire fences. On reaching the second wood, we found it to be composed of widely-spaced tall trees, with the undergrowth cut away and a high closely-woven barbed-wire fence running round it. This might be either part of the frontier defences or it might be merely farmers' wire. In any case it would be most unwise to attempt to get into the wood.

The side we had reached ran roughly east and west. On the whole it seemed safer to follow it in the latter direction and after two or three hundred yards we came quite suddenly upon a road. It ran nearly north and south, and, from its size and good surface, we judged it to be the main road from Aachen to Holland. This gave us an excellent idea as to how far west we had come, but, owing to the lack of detail on our map, still no certain knowledge as to how far north. There was no one about; the road was straight and, with its white surface, easy to see. A low hedge bounded it on either side. *If we were challenged we could separate and hide in the woods. We were taking a big risk, and there was no time for hesitation,* and we walked along it boldly for a few hundred yards. Then, as it turned and we could not see clearly around the bend, we

took to a track on the left-hand side. The troublesome woods flanking the road had given way to a series of fields and orchards from which we again caught sight of some lights. They now bore roughly east-north-east, showing that we had made good progress to the north-west.

We strode on as fast as we could, for the sky was rapidly getting grey ; in less than half an hour it would be broad daylight. And then we almost tripped over a sentry ! He was sitting in a little rough shelter down in a hollow ; in front of him there was a fire in a bucket over which he was warming himself. I dimly perceived a *Landsturm* helmet on his head, and a rifle propped up beside him. Fortunately he gave no sign of having seen or heard us.

We retraced our steps on tiptoe for twenty yards, and then turned back towards the road. We reached it and found it deserted, but having just seen a sentry the danger of following it seemed too great and we contented ourselves with going straight across so as to avoid a house only a few yards ahead. By the time we had crawled through a hedge on the far side and crossed a small field, it was light enough for us to be seen nearly half a mile away. With a sense of having failed, we realised we could go no farther that day, and began looking around anxiously for cover. The only possible hiding-place in sight was a small, sparse wood some four hundred yards farther north. We walked hard for it and, screened by a hedge, even ran the last hundred yards. We reached the trees and searched for a spot where we could if necessary lie up for the whole day. There was much wire and very little undergrowth ; the best cover available was a blackberry bush. As we crawled in, some men passed along an unseen road lying ahead of us and evidently joining up with the one we had just crossed. They were talking and I listened attentively, but I was unable to make out what they were saying, though the words sounded distinctly German. For the present we could do nothing but keep quiet and watch for sentries.

Now that it was daylight we were able to go over our map more carefully, and followed mentally, step by step, the course we had taken during the night. Very gradually I became convinced that we had actually crossed the frontier and were already in Holland. This was a dangerously optimistic view to take and Robinson disagreed entirely. He was sure we were still in Germany, rightly arguing that we had seen practically nothing of the frontier guards and that we had not yet reached the all-important railway. We talked it over for a long time,

while Robinson produced a needle and thread and mended some of the worst tears in our clothing. For a short interval we took it in turns to sleep, and during Robinson's watch he woke me up to point out two men in uniform going along the road. It was impossible to see at that distance whether they were Dutch or German since the two uniforms are very similar; yet they were going in the direction from which we had come, and presently two more men came back. Supposing that they were sentries being relieved, this would seem to prove that the frontier was behind us.

Then a clock struck not very far from us. I counted six chimes, but by Robinson's watch it was now seven. Of course the clock might be wrong, but if not then the inference was obvious: the Germans had summer time, the Dutch had not—it was a Dutch clock. But a Dutch clock might well be heard in Germany. Were we a few yards inside Germany, or had we just crossed the border?

We were still anxious, but the evidence was turning in our favour, and Robinson was getting more optimistic when shortly after eight o'clock the unexpected happened. Some way off we heard the puffing of an engine and we listened intently, trying to make out in what direction it was going. It must be on *the* railway; if we could reach it we should be safe. At times the sound seemed to die down, only to burst out again closer. There was something awe-inspiring about the slow rhythmical puffing. Like the beat of a war drum in an African forest. I felt almost frightened. It came nearer and nearer, and then to our amazement the engine steamed into sight a hundred yards ahead of our hiding-place, along what we had thought to be a road and which the trees had prevented us from seeing clearly. It was a goods train, and on the sides of the trucks were the Dutch colours and the word "Nederland" in large letters.

We stood up and walked to the line; on the far side of it we saw a house with a Dutch advertisement on its side, and a signpost pointing to Spekholz . . . Holland! A thousand prison dreams of freedom faded into one reality: we were no longer prisoners.

# UNDER FIRE AT SIDNEY STREET

By

FREDERICK PORTER WENSLEY, O.B.E.

*Ex-Detective-Inspector Wensley was, before his retirement, Chief Constable of the Criminal Investigation Department of Scotland Yard. One of the best-known cases on which he worked was the Siege of Sidney Street, and here he gives his first-hand account of a crime which stirred the whole country.*

MELODRAMA may be all very well for the spectator, but it is sometimes very tiring work for those called upon to play a principal part. Until I read of it afterwards I confess I did not know how thrilling the siege of Sidney Street had been.

The opening of the drama took place half an hour before midnight, on Friday, 16th December 1910. The setting was three streets forming, so to speak, three sides of a rectangle. One of these was Houndsditch, another was Cutler Street; the third a little cul-de-sac called Exchange Buildings, which backed on to Houndsditch.

A Houndsditch tradesman became alarmed by mysterious sounds as of sawing and drilling which could be heard through the wall of a back room, and called the attention of the constable on the beat to them. Next door there was a jeweller's shop which had been locked up for the night, and the policeman at once became suspicious. He had a look at Exchange Buildings and sent for help. Other officers arrived, and some of them having taken up their places in strategic positions, a Sergeant Bentley went to make a closer investigation of Exchange Buildings.

At only one house was there a light. This was Number 111. Bentley knocked at the door and when it was partly opened was heard to ask if any work was going on at the back, and if he might have a look round. The person to whom he was



speaking assented and retreated into the house. Bentley followed till he stood on the threshold of a gas-lit outer room. As he was apparently taking his bearings two pistol-shots suddenly rang out and he fell mortally hurt.

Then a hand gripping an automatic showed in the doorway and describing a part of a circle swept the street with a shower of bullets. Immediately afterwards, several people armed with automatic pistols dashed into the street firing right and left. They were met by a number of unarmed police officers who had rushed towards the house at the sound of the first shots. Four of these were at once hit. Three of them, dangerously wounded, dropped to the ground. The fourth, Constable Choate, in spite of his wounds, tackled one of the men and held on till some one gave him a final shot in the back and he fell in a dying condition. It was discovered later that he had been hit eight times.

All this happened with lightning rapidity. Five police officers, of whom three were dead or dying, lay on the ground, and the assassins, supporting one of their number who had been accidentally shot, had disappeared before further help could be summoned. Only one man—Mr. Levy, a tobacconist's manager—was known to have seen them while they were making their escape. Attracted by the shots he was running towards Exchange Buildings when, at the corner of Cutler Street, he came face to face with three men and a woman hastening eastwards. A couple of pistols were levelled at him with the fierce command, "Do not follow." Then they wheeled through an alley leading to Middlesex Street and were gone.

It was the next day that I was drawn into the affair. By that time the City police had made exhaustive preliminary investigations. They discovered plenty to show that there had been a carefully planned scheme by skilled burglars to rob the jeweller's shop. In the early part of December a foreigner calling himself Levi rented 11 Exchange Buildings. A few days later another foreigner giving the name of Goldstein took No. 9. No. 10 was the house immediately behind the jeweller's premises, 118A Houndsditch. This house was not available at the time, but a day or two before the outrage it had become empty. All of these were separated from the Houndsditch buildings by a narrow yard bounded by a high wall.

Until the search after the murders there had been no suspicion of No. 9. Then there was found there a big cylinder of oxygen gas which had been delivered in a packing-

case from a coster's barrow on the Friday afternoon. A number of scientific safe-breaking tools were found in each house. Unquestionably, therefore, the confederates were working from the two places, and it was possible that some from No. 9 had stolen away quietly after the attack on the police. Between No. 10 and No. 9 a hole had been driven, diagonally, in the yard wall through which access could be gained to the back of 118A Houndsditch. Work had apparently been carried on partly by candlelight, and two bottles in which candles had been stuck bore fingerprints, but these could not be identified with any in the Finger Print Bureau at Scotland Yard at the time.

The time of the attempt had no doubt been deliberately arranged for the Jewish Sabbath, which starts at sunset on the Friday, when the shops would have been closed and the neighbourhood very quiet. Thus, if all had gone well from the burglars' point of view, they would have had ample time to open the safe and get away before there was any discovery of the coup.

By noon next day another splash of melodrama was added to the story. This episode we learned from a young doctor who had been acting as *locum tenens* for a friend whose surgery was in the Commercial Road. At half-past three in the morning he was roused by a woman's voice through a speaking tube that led from the door to his bedside. Hurriedly dressing he went down. Two young women were waiting for him and in broken English managed to convey that a man, "very bad," was at 59 Grove Street.

That was all that was said. They preceded him along the road and suddenly one of the women disappeared down a side street. The doctor continued to follow the other till they came to a mean little house in Grove Street, locked and shuttered. Only after repeated knocks were they admitted by some one whom the doctor did not see. By the light of a match they passed through a tiny passage in which clothes were hanging on a string, and up the narrow stairs into a dimly lit bedroom that was in disorder. A fully dressed man, groaning in pain, was lying on the bed. He explained that his name was George Gardstein and that a friend had accidentally shot him in the back. As the doctor leaned over to examine him, the light became fainter and the girl went out to put a penny in the slot.

The doctor concluded that the man had been shot through the lung and the stomach, and urged—speaking in French—

that he should be taken to the London Hospital. Both the man and the girl vehemently resisted this, and after doing what he could, the doctor returned to his surgery with the girl, who was to take back some medicine.

Had we known of this at the time there might have been no siege of Sidney Street. The doctor returned to the house at about eleven in the morning and was admitted by two young men, who professed to know nothing of the wounded man. The doctor went upstairs and found his patient lying dead in a deserted room. By this time the two men had gone and he could find no one else in the house.

With Detective-Inspector (now Superintendent) Thompson, of the City Police, and several members of my own staff, I went to the house in Grove Street. We were let in by the landlady, a fat old Jewess, who couldn't or wouldn't understand our questions. There was no time to waste. If one of the murderers had died in the house, others, for aught we knew, might be still lurking there. Cutting short a confused babble I applied a rough test. I signed to her to lead the way up the narrow stairs. I guessed that if armed men were awaiting us, no power on earth could have got her up. With some reluctance—due as I afterwards discovered to a distaste to go near the dead man—she preceded me. Her bulk amply protected me from any possible bullet, although, maybe, I might have been crushed to death if she had fallen backwards.

In a drab bedroom, much confused as if some one had been making a hasty search, was the body of Gardstein, and at a first glance we doubted if he was really dead. Under his pillow was a fully loaded automatic, which had probably been placed there by his confederates before he died, to enable him to make some kind of a fight for it if he was discovered. A dagger and a quantity of ammunition were in various places.

An adjoining bedroom had been entered simultaneously. There an agitated girl was feverishly burning papers, and Detective-Sergeant Leeson, springing forward, gripped her arm as she was flinging a number of photographs on the fire.

To all our questions she shook her head with a "Me no understand." She was taken to the police station and there, through an interpreter, she gave her name as Sara Rosa Trassjohnsky, and from what she told us and from a search of the house, we were able to develop lines of inquiry that led to the ultimate revelation of the whole story.

The dead murderer, who was known variously as Gardstein, Morountzeff, Morin, and other names, was a man who had fled from Russia about twelve months previously. At the Anarchist Club he had become associated with a group of other young desperate foreigners, many of whom were quite unscrupulous and ready to join in any mischief. Gradually there had sprung up an intimacy between nine or ten people, all of whom were, in some sense, dominated by Gardstein.

Among these was a young man named Fritz Svaars, who was being sought by the Russian authorities on a criminal charge, and had only been in England about six months. Fritz was one of the tenants of the room at 59 Grove Street, the other being a man called Peter Piatkoff or Schtern—who was something of an artist and who achieved some notoriety during the investigation as "Peter the Painter." Fritz's mistress, a girl called Luba Milstein, stayed with them, and they were frequently visited by other members of the gang.

On the afternoon of 16th December some kind of a conference seems to have been held in Fritz's rooms. Those who took part included Gardstein, Fritz, "Peter the Painter," and men named "Joseph," Zourka Duboff, John Rosen, Jacob Peters (a cousin of Fritz Svaars), Osep Federoff, Max, and Karl Hoffman, as well as two women Trassjohnsky and Milstein. Several of these had been seen at different times passing in and out of Exchange Buildings, and it was hard to suppose that such a gathering a few hours before the murders was for purely social reasons.

Although Gardstein, who posed as a chemist, had been making experiments with oxygen gas and blow-pipes, very few, if any, of the gang had any experience of safebreaking. They had, therefore, enlisted the aid of a "mechanic" to help in the technical details of the projected robbery. This was the man called "Max." Whatever his abilities as a burglar he was a novice with firearms and this, I believe, was the cause of Gardstein's death. While Max was at work on the wall, the others had left a pistol for him on a table. When the alarm came he had snatched up the weapon and following the others out, joined wildly in the firing, with the result that he hit Gardstein. He managed to get clear away and there was a story that some of his confederates, enraged by the loss of their leader, sought him that night to take summary vengeance. "Max" at any rate escaped. We heard of him

later in Paris, but there was mighty little evidence we could have brought against him.

Grove Street is about a mile from Exchange Buildings. It has always been a mystery to me how that grim little procession, the men supporting their dying comrade, one, or perhaps two, women walking behind, managed to traverse that distance about midnight without attracting more attention than it apparently did. Before the war Whitechapel was intensely alive at that hour.

For some way Fritz carried Gardstein in his arms "like a baby" and it was their intention to put him down in Commercial Road to find his own way to some place of safety, but he begged them, with tears, not to abandon him. So they took him to Grove Street, where he was left in the care of the girls Trassjohnsky and Milstein.

These two, who were apparently much upset, did what they could, and presently determined to fetch a doctor, arranging also that Milstein should then leave to sleep in Trassjohnsky's lodgings in Settle Street, near by. After the doctor's first visit Trassjohnsky gravitated between Grove Street and Settle Street, her final visit to the former being instigated by Milstein, for the purpose of burning the papers which we found her in the act of destroying.

When they had left Gardstein at Grove Street, some, at any rate, of the assassins made their way to the lodgings of a man called Hoffman, in Lindley Street. Among them was "Joseph" carrying a pistol, Fritz with two pistols—one of which he examined with the remark that he wanted to be sure it was fully loaded—and "Peter the Painter." There was some conversation and they dispersed. Almost at that time I had passed the house on my way home. Perhaps it was providential that I did not meet them.

On the Sunday, Luba Milstein came to Leman Street Police Station, and I handed her over to the City Police. By Monday things were a little clearer. We learned of the meeting that had taken place at Hoffman's lodgings, but naturally, when we went there, our birds had flown. A hot trail took officers to a house in Havering Street, where Peter the Painter had taken refuge and they missed him by only a few minutes. Like "Max," he got away to France, but the authorities felt that the evidence against him was not strong enough to justify an application for extradition.

By Thursday, 22nd December, three men who we believed to have some connection with the crime had been located.

One of these, Zourka Duboff, was found in Galloway Road, Shepherd's Bush, and detained. That evening I, with Detective-Inspector Collinson of the City Police, and other officers, was waiting in the room of a house in Turner Street for Jacob Peters. Quite unsuspecting, he walked into our arms at half-past eight, and after a few questions through an interpreter, was sent to the police station. Towards midnight, I went with Detective-Sergeant Richardson to some tenement buildings in Romford Street, where we believed that Federoff, another of the gang, had taken refuge. We passed up the stone steps to his room, and as we knocked at the door some one turned off the gas supply to the house, leaving the whole place in darkness. I imagine that it must have been an accident.

Anyhow, nothing untoward followed. We rushed in and seized Federoff who, in broken English, frankly admitted that he had visited Fritz Svaars and Peter the Painter at Grove Street.

"These men," I told him, "are suspected of having murdered three police officers, and you will have to go to Old Jewry" (the headquarters of the City Police).

"Very well," he said, "I was not there when they did it."

Duboff and Peters were recognised by Mr. Levy, the tobacconist to whom I have already referred, as the men he had seen with Gardstein (whose body he identified) escaping with a woman from Cutler Street on the night of the murders. With Federoff and the girls Trassjohnsky and Milstein they were all charged with being concerned in the crime.

We continued the hunt for others of the gang, but two or three of them, as I have said, scuttled to France. Fritz and Joseph were in close hiding, nor could we trace the whereabouts of the other two men, Rosen and Hoffman. There was also a third girl, Gardstein's sweetheart, whom we were anxious to find. Day and night scores of men ransacked the East End and other places where they were likely to be, but, for a while, without result. All sorts of information, much of it wild, some of it reliable, had to be sifted and we knew little rest. But many of those who knew or guessed the truth remained silent. They were afraid of what might happen should the rogues, after all, evade us.

Christmas brought us little respite and a couple of days afterwards we hit on the spot which for some time had been Gardstein's headquarters in London. This was a little house in Gold Street, near Stepney Green, where he had taken a

room under the name of Morin. He had pretended to be a student of chemistry, which had enabled him without suspicion to amass a quantity of chemicals, in order, no doubt, to conduct various sinister experiments. We found nitric acid, nitroglycerine, books which dealt with the manufacture of explosives and the cutting and melting of various metals by means of acids and oxygen gas, anarchist literature, a Mauser magazine-pistol, a cartridge-belt, and hundreds of cartridges. Incidentally, some of his researches had apparently been carried on at a cycle-maker's workroom at Islington.

He had been frequently visited by "Joseph," who had on occasions stayed in the house. On the morning of 16th December, Gardstein had told his landlady that he was going away for a time, and asked that his room should be kept locked. Until our visit no one had associated this "chemical student" with the Houndsditch murders.

There were two obvious reasons why Gardstein had not been taken back to this place after he was shot. One was the distance—it was nearly a mile farther away from Houndsditch than Grove Street; the other was that his friends were at the time practically all living in the neighbourhood of Grove Street.

The story of Sidney Street forms a chapter by itself. It will, perhaps, avoid confusion if I conclude here the story of the remaining investigations into the Houndsditch affair. Considerable numbers of men of both the London forces were employed, and for weeks scarcely a night passed without an alarm of some sort, always resulting in scores of our men being mobilised quietly in some suspected area. We spared no effort for, quite apart from the natural wish to run down the murderers, it was a disquieting thought that ruthless men armed with weapons of precision were abroad, and there was always looming before us the possibility of another tragedy.

In the beginning of February the hunt led to Well Street, Hackney, and there Rosen *alias* Zelin was picked up. A few days later news came to us that another of the men we wanted was to be found at some house in Cannon Street Road. At two in the morning a cordon was drawn round a block of streets so quietly that the policeman on the beat carried on his ordinary patrol duties for a time, unaware that anything extraordinary was afoot. Then began the somewhat nervy—in the circumstances—business of a house-to-house search. A suspect was found asleep in bed and was roughly aroused when a big detective lifted him bodily to his feet. With an

overcoat over his nightshirt he was escorted to the police station. He was Karl Hoffman, at whose lodgings in Lindley Street some of the assassins had foregathered after the crime.

That same morning I arrested Gardstein's sweetheart, Nina Vassileva. She was a tall, self-possessed girl, who had been living off and on in the house of some Jewish folk at Buross Street. After the murders she had dyed her flaxen hair black and had announced her intention of going to Paris, but after a walk one evening she returned and declared that she was being watched. Thereafter she kept close to the house, spending her time, according to her landlady, in dealing cards to decide her fortune.

In a shabby back room, partly dressed, with her long dyed hair streaming down her back, she fenced in broken English with the few questions I put. She explained that she was a Russian and made cigarettes, and had been to the club in Jubilee Street. She had heard of the murders of the police officers.

"Some of the men who took part in the shooting are said to be members of the club," I said. "Do you know them?"

"Perhaps I do—perhaps I don't," she retorted.

Nor would she admit that she knew any of the men in certain photographs that I showed her. She scornfully denied that she had any pistol ammunition concealed, nor, in fact, was any found. She was handed over to the City Police, and when her finger-prints were taken they were found to correspond with those on the bottles that had been used as candle-holders at Exchange Buildings. She was identified as the woman who had escaped with the murderers.

Nina Vassileva was convicted and sentenced to two years' hard labour, but on appeal the conviction was quashed on the ground of misdirection by the judge.

Although we had been aware that Fritz Svaars and "Joseph," two of the most desperate of the Houndsditch criminals, were lurking in the East End, it was not till Monday, 2nd January 1911, that we really came up with them. For weeks they had been hunted from pillar to post, shifting their lodgings again and again. They must have been much troubled by the reluctance of their friends to take the risk of sheltering them for any length of time. So they passed from place to place, always in my division, and with detectives ever at their heels.

Sometime on that Monday, Superintendent Ottaway, of



the City Police, sent word to me that promising information had come to hand. I at once went to the Old Jewry, where Superintendents Stark and Ottaway told me that they had heard that Fritz and "Joseph" were in touch with a certain woman and were likely to change their retreat from her rooms that night. I do not think that at that moment they were sure where she lived, but late in the evening both her name and address were ascertained. She was a Russian, Mrs. Betsy Gershon, and she had a room at 100 Sidney Street, a thoroughfare which runs between the Whitechapel Road and the Commercial Road.

This street was in the heart of the East End, quite close to those places where most of the events I have narrated in the preceding paragraph took place. It was thickly populated, mainly by Jews and aliens, and practically every house contained several families. In many respects it was a likely place for the fugitives to hide in; but it must be remembered that our information, although it seemed reliable, might have proved to be merely another of those false or inaccurate reports of which we received so many during the investigation.

With my City colleagues and some of my own staff I went to have a quiet look at the house, a drab three-storey building running flush with the pavement. To have made any inquiries among the teeming population of the quarter at that time would probably have led to the suspects becoming aware that we had traced them, without any advantage from our point of view. For we had decided that, if the men were there and it was their intention to leave that night, our most effective course would be to intercept them when they got into the street. So men were left to keep observation and we waited on events. This, at best, could only be a temporary measure. It would have been impossible to keep watch for long with any degree of secrecy and with a sufficient number of men to overcome armed resistance.

At about midnight Stark, Ottaway, Mulvaney, the superintendent of the H Division, and myself held another consultation. We resolved, as soon as most of the residents in the neighbourhood had gone to bed—Whitechapel kept late hours in those days—to draw a cordon round the house, using all immediately available detectives of both forces—thirty or so—as well as a number of uniformed men. If firing should start it was very desirable that we should have the streets clear, and, of course, there was no wish to take chances of the men escaping by a sortie as they had at Houndsditch.

We hoped, also, that if the men did not emerge from the house, they might surrender, when they realised that they were surrounded by an overwhelming force—although, in truth, we did not altogether expect them to do so.

Some few of our people armed themselves with such weapons as they could lay their hands on—old-fashioned bulldog revolvers, shot-guns, and Morris-tube rifles borrowed from a miniature range. Personally I did not care to encumber myself with a weapon.

It was a miserably cold night, with gusts of sleet and rain, and the streets were practically deserted when we took up our positions. As time wore on the prospects of the men attempting to steal out and so running into our hands, grew fainter. Right up to this hour, it must be understood, we had only the foggiest notion of who was in the house beside the assassins—if indeed they were there.

So, at half-past three, we roused a Mr. and Mrs. Fleishman who were living on the ground floor of No. 100. From them we learned that the lodgers in the house included an old man and his wife, another couple with two rooms on the first floor, and Mrs. Gershon, who had the front room on the second floor. They knew nothing of any visitors who might be with Mrs. Gershon.

Here I should make it clear that Mrs. Gershon's room was approached by a narrow stair up which there was room for only one person at a time to pass. There was a right-angled turn at the top, and any one standing there could have swept the stairs and passage with pistol-fire without showing themselves. It would have been simply suicide for any stranger to have gone up, for the staircase could have been held against an army. We determined to know more of the situation.

We persuaded Mrs. Fleishman—whose actions were not liable to arouse suspicion—to go up on the pretext that her husband, who had been ill, had become suddenly worse, and ask Mrs. Gershon to come down.

She knocked at the door of Mrs. Gershon's room. To her surprise the other woman came from an adjoining apartment which was used as a dressmaker's stock-room. She was dressed, save for a skirt and shoes, and explained that she had been about to put a penny in an automatic gas-meter. However, she came down but halted at the foot of the stairs with an exclamation when she saw that the street door was open. Mrs. Fleishman reassured her, and then to prevent

argument, she was seized and carried bodily next door where, in a state of evident consternation, she replied to our questions.

Her story was that "Joseph," whom she had known for some time, had unexpectedly arrived with a companion, a stranger to her, some hours previously—at about ten or eleven o'clock. As at that time the place had been under close surveillance this was a little difficult to believe. She said that after she had given them a cup of tea they refused to leave, and to ensure that she did not leave the place herself to seek help, had taken away her skirt and boots.

This was enough to show us that there was little hope of taking them by surprise. On an off-chance of luring them down, Mrs. Gershon was sent to report that the man downstairs was seriously ill, and to ask one of them to fetch a doctor. She returned to announce that she had had no success and, equipped with a pair of boots and a coat borrowed from Mrs. Fleishman, she was sent to the police station for the time being.

There was now only one thing to do. We had to get all the rest of the occupants out of the house before we took any drastic step. This involved some trouble and risk, for it was not easy to get some of these excitable Jewish folk to leave their beds at dead of night for some reason that they could only vaguely comprehend. In this work we were assisted by Harry Wagner, who was associated with the Jewish Board of Guardians, and who acted as interpreter, and assisted us throughout the night without the slightest heed of danger. There was particular difficulty with one old man and his wife who screamed with fear, and some degree of force had to be exerted with them.

All hope of getting at the men unawares had now been abandoned. The prolonged absence of Mrs. Gershon alone must have aroused their suspicions, and they could scarcely have failed to be aware of the stir in the lower part of the house. More police were sent for to keep a wider area of streets clear, and we waited for day to break.

On the opposite side of the road was a small archway leading to a yard in which vans and carts were kept. Here some of us sheltered till a bleak dawn, at about half-past seven. Then, after a deliberation, it was determined to notify the surrounded men that their position was hopeless and that armed men were all round the place.

A loud knock at the street door met with no response. Then a few of us went into the roadway and a handful of

pebbles was thrown against the upper windows. Nothing happened for an instant. I was stooping to gather more pebbles when suddenly shot after shot rang out in swift succession. That any one of those in the open should have escaped that fusillade fired at a range of less than thirty yards from weapons that could fire two shots a second and with an effective range of more than a thousand yards was marvellous. One officer had a bullet through his hat. Another, Detective-Sergeant Leeson, staggered towards me.

"I am shot," he cried.

Detective-Sergeant Richardson ran to him and supported him through the archway to the yard at the back, where he was placed against a van.

"Mr. Wensley, I am dying," he said as I bent over him. "They have shot me through the heart. Give my love to my children."

We got him into a back room of one of the adjoining houses. To have ventured into the street again would have been almost certain death, but a Mr. Louis Levy volunteered to fetch a doctor by scaling walls and clambering over roofs at the back. He led a doctor back by the same route, and the latter ordered Leeson's immediate removal to hospital. This presented an awkward problem. At the back of the small yard was a tall wall, beyond which was a shed over which an active man might pass to drop into a brewery yard. Both the wall and the shed, however, were commanded from the uppermost windows of 100 Sidney Street, and that we should be able to get a badly wounded man—who was no light weight—across without attracting attention was at least unlikely. But it had to be tried.

A van was placed against the wall and on this a ladder was reared to the roof of the shed. Somewhere we had got hold of a stretcher and on this Leeson was carried out and we succeeded in getting him to the roof. Directly we were up, bullets began to splash all round us.

"You are taking me into the line of fire again," cried Leeson, as he became aware of the situation.

To help us in our difficulty, with considerable courage and presence of mind he managed somehow to get off the stretcher and roll himself to the other side, where people were waiting to help him down. As the senior officer there it was my duty to remain till every one else reached safety. As a result I found myself a solitary target on the wrong side of the roof just at the moment that the assassins were getting

the range. The bullets were now coming fast and unpleasantly close. My only chance of safety was the gutter of the shed which was partly shielded by the ridge of the wall. There I lay at full length in an inch or so of sleet and water, stiff and frozen, with even the slightest movement greeted with a shower of bullets. Curiously enough, the obvious way out of my dilemma never occurred to me—to loosen the tiles near me and drop through the roof to the interior of the shed. So I remained for half an hour—the longest half-hour I ever spent. Meanwhile, a rumour that I had been shot steadily gained circulation and was even published in the newspapers.

At last I took advantage of a moment when the attention of the assassins had been diverted, for by this time they were firing at anything that moved within the limits of their sight—even killing a cat that slipped out of a doorway—and dropped back the way I had come. I may add that poor Leeson, who had been shot through the chest, ultimately recovered and is now living in retirement sound and well.

As the morning wore on it became more and more evident that the weapons of the police were outmatched. Appeal was made to the officer commanding the Scots Guards at the Tower of London, and a detachment of eighteen marksmen with service rifles was sent to our aid. Later, I believe, additional men were sent. Some of these were stationed in the buildings at front and rear of the besieged house, and others lay at each end of the street on boards intended for the display of newspaper posters that had been borrowed from newsagents.

The wisdom of having a large number of police at hand was demonstrated as news of the siege gained ground and thousands of people crowded the adjacent streets, eager to view the happenings. With the powerful weapons that were then being used, it was a mercy that none of the spectators were injured by ricochetting bullets.

Sir Edward Henry, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, was out of London, and Major (later Sir Frederick) Wodehouse, the Deputy Commissioner, came down between nine and ten to take charge of the operations. Other high administrative officials also arrived, and later in the day Mr. Winston Churchill, the then Home Secretary.

There was a great deal of confusion, and it would have been utterly impossible for any one man to have exercised effective control of the proceedings. For those at the front of the house to communicate with those at the back, for



*Detective-Sergeant Leeson staggered towards me :  
"I am shot!" he cried.*



instance, meant a long and intricate detour through houses, backyards, and over walls, and to find any particular person was a long job. We were dealing, too, with an utterly unprecedented situation which could not have been foreseen.

Soldiers and police kept up an unrelenting fire which was vigorously returned from the windows of the besieged house. Very early every pane of glass had been shattered and the broken fragments littered the sidewalks. The men within fired from behind the fluttering curtains and it was hard to detect their movements. A burst of firing would come first from one floor and then from another. In the house immediately opposite bedding and other household furniture was piled near the windows as some sort of cover for the besiegers. Various devices, including the exhibition of dummies in police uniform, were tried to induce the cornered men to expose themselves, but they never did.

The last act of the drama opened at about one o'clock. A thin whiff of smoke showed at one of the top windows. As it grew in volume its significance was realised. The house was afire. A fresh burst of firing came from the lower windows and was fiercely answered by the besiegers. There were a few minutes of tension and scores of rifles and pistols were levelled at the street door which at any instant might have been flung open by those within, whose only remote chance was now to make a wild despairing rush. Personally, I have always held as a probable surmise that they deliberately set fire to the place, intending to create a distraction with a view to an attempt at escape. If so they abandoned the idea.

The smoke grew thicker and fire-engines dashed to the edges of the police-cordon where, in spite of the protests of the firemen, they were halted. Spasmodic firing was still coming from the burning house. There could be no point in useless sacrifice of valuable lives. The end, in any event, was close at hand.

As the fire worked downwards shots came at more infrequent intervals from the lower floors. The slackening in the defence was due, as we afterwards learned, to the fact that one of the assassins—"Joseph"—had been killed by a rifle-bullet and that Fritz continued the fight alone.

Towards two o'clock the house was a mass of flames, and it seemed impossible that any one could remain in it alive. So far as I could observe—and I was fairly close—all attempt at resistance had finished some time before the firemen were allowed to get to work, although there was a statement that



shots were fired afterwards. Another rumour that gained currency was that the men had broken through a wall into one of the adjoining houses, but, in fact, there were ample men there to deal with them.

As soon as the fire had been got under control I was foolish enough to follow at the heels of the firemen when they entered the still-smoking building. Luck must have been with me that day, for again I escaped without a scratch when within an ace of death. An immense mass of stone coping suddenly crashed just in front of me, overwhelming some of the firemen. One poor fellow lost his life and three or four were badly hurt. Apart from Leeson, these were the main casualties throughout the day. One or two people received comparatively trivial injuries and there were several narrow escapes. From that point of view, the proceedings had ended better than they might have done.

In the débris two charred bodies were found. One of them had been shot through the head and the other had apparently died of suffocation. At the subsequent inquest a verdict of justifiable homicide was returned. So ended the siege of Sidney Street.

# LOST IN A BLIZZARD

By

SIR GEORGE H. WILKINS

*Captain, now Sir George H. Wilkins, is famous as the man who navigated under the North Pole in a submarine and flew over it in an aeroplane. This is his own account of the latter great achievement—the flight from Barrow in Alaska to Svalbard, still better known as Spitsbergen, in April 1928. He and his pilot, Lieutenant Eielson, had taken off from Barrow at about 10 in the morning, and now after about thirteen hours in the air, Captain Wilkins realises from his observations that it is impossible for them to escape flying into storms.*

IT was between 1 and 2 a.m. Barrow time, 8 a.m. local time, and I had not eaten since leaving Fred Hopson's kitchen eighteen hours before, but I interrupted my breakfast to write Eielson a note: "There are two courses open," it said. "We are above storm now. Down there we can land and wait until it's over. Can we get off again? If we go on we will meet storm at Spitsbergen and perhaps never find the land. Do you wish to land now?"

Ben with his stolid courage and calm considering mind wriggled in his seat. I could see a few inches of his shoulders above the gas tanks, his head being hidden by the wing. In less than a minute he replied: "I'm willing to go on and chance it." That accorded with my desire.

We had been thirteen hours in the air.

It would have grieved us more than enough to have wrecked our plane or left it behind. We had experienced that feeling of loss last year when compelled to leave the Stinson biplane for want of gas. I was willing to trust Eielson's skill as pilot in bad weather; he was willing to trust my navigation and we both had confidence in the men who had

produced our equipment and in the quality of our gas and oil, so we kept our course without faltering.

Our experience last year in making three forced landings on the Arctic pack-ice far from shore to the north of Alaska and Siberia proved beyond doubt that, if needs be, one can land an airplane on the pack-ice and with a reasonable load take off again. We had seen many fine landing fields between Alaska and Grant Land, but on the Greenland side of the Arctic Ocean favourable sites for landing on the ice were less frequent.

As we swung clear of clouded Grant Land we saw what Peary named *The Big Lead*. It stretched from a few miles north of the neighbourhood of Cape Columbia towards Greenland until lost from view in the distant haze.

As we passed onwards and north of Greenland the ice below us was much fractured. Much of the area was covered with ice too thin to land on, and sledging travel thereabout, on the day we passed, would have been impossible. Not long after clearing the clouds near Grant Land the snowdrifts showed the wind to have been variable throughout the season. North of Grant Land the wind had been frequently if not constantly from the north or slightly north-east. Our course was somewhat north of east and as we gained a more northerly latitude we slipped from the edge of the Greenland wind storm into still-cold, forty-eight-below-zero weather. For the first time during the flight my feet and hands were slightly chilled, but not cold. The oil temperature in the engine decreased to about sixty degrees Fahrenheit and from time to time Eielson had to climb the machine steeply or advance the throttle in order to increase the temperature of the engine.

Soon our course trended south of east and as we approached latitude eighty-four from the north, we again came within the influence of the wind. Southward and more south our flight continued, and as we swung in that direction the wind swung also, speeding us on our way. Three hours after leaving Grant Land one lone peak on the most northerly point of Greenland showed dimly in the cloud-tops far to the south-by-west.

I was now positive that the low temperature and the high north-west wind would lead to trouble where it met the warmer air near Spitsbergen. Already on the far horizon we could see the ashen greyness that, when seen from a distance, indicates high Arctic winds and storms. But the North Wind

had us in its paw and, as Peary said of his return trip from the Pole, we were sliding down the North Pole Hill in fine shape.

The edge of the Greenland storm and the cloudy conditions near Spitsbergen seemed to meet in the far south, but for a couple of hundred miles our way was clear. Then we could see before us high, curling, cumulus clouds rising to heights even greater than our own lightly loaded plane could reach. As we approached the clouds Eielson climbed the machine steadily up, up to seven, eight thousand feet and the clouds were still high above us. It was useless. We could not hope to get above them and if we were to conserve our gasoline it was not advisable to go any higher. We must thread our way through the cloud lanes—and keep our course as best we could.

From my cockpit the sun, which had swung steadily on our left until after passing Grant Land, was now obscured by the right wing of the plane. Just before entering the clouds I asked Eielson to vary from the course for a moment while I made an observation to locate our position as nearly as possible.

The sun at the time was about sixteen degrees above the horizon. By coming east we had met his Solar Majesty half-way round the world. Several sights gave me the needed information. We were approximately two hundred miles northwest true from Spitsbergen and slightly east of our course. The wind from a little west of north was drifting us eastward, but I was not inclined to alter my calculated compass course at that moment. There would be no telling the force and direction of the wind when we reached the clouds, and I considered it wiser to be too far east over land than too far west over the Greenland sea from where we would have had to fight our way in a cross wind to make the coast of Spitsbergen.

We made sure that all the gas the pumps would carry was in the top tanks. It appeared that we had gas to last four hours at least and perhaps more. At an altitude of eight thousand feet we entered the cloudy area. Eielson selected the lanes between the feathery masses, cleverly compensating for his deviation without my aid. The air was turbulent and unstable. At rare intervals we saw in the dim distance beneath us dark streaks of water between scattered ice. For an hour and a half we flew through cloud lanes, very occasionally seeing patches of almost ice-free water, but these glimpses were too fleeting to enable us to get an observation for drift

and speed. We could see the sun at times and at others it was hidden behind high clouds, but these infrequent flashes enabled us to check our compass course.

As one would naturally assume, our compass during that period was less reliable than at any other time of the flight. Frequent and sudden changes to avoid cloud formations and to follow lanes swung our compass back and forth, giving it no time to steady. To keep our course we had to rely on our sense of direction, a study of the tilt of the cloud-tops and occasional sights of the sun, rather than place any reliance on the compass.

We figured that if the wind had held in our favour—and we believed that it had—we must be nearing the mountains at the north end of Spitsbergen. But even the highest mountain-tops would be covered with cloud if there the clouds continued as high as those among which we were flying. The clouds also appeared to extend down almost to the water so that we dared not go beneath them for fear of running directly into the mountains.

Our engine had functioned splendidly all the way, but it was reaching the end of a gruelling trip and the gas in the tanks was getting low. Now in the moisture-laden atmosphere there was greater danger that the carburation of gas and air might fail and let us down into the icy water. If we turned east to make sure of being over land we would have—assuming we could make a safe landing in the mountains—a most tedious journey over deep snow and glaciers.

Southwards the clouds seemed lower and we turned in that direction, hoping to spy a mountain peak by which to locate our exact position. Soon we were rewarded by the appearance beneath us of two sharp, needle-pointed peaks. Down we spun through the break in the clouds for a closer view. Once getting a sight of land we thought it might be possible to fly low and follow its contours.

The air was turbulent above the clouds; beneath them it was boisterous. Our now almost empty plane was tossed like a cork on a stormy sea. Loose things in the cabin tumbled and rattled. With nothing to get a grip on I tumbled too, if I didn't rattle.

Right then Eielson's valuable training and cool skill demonstrated their worth. With the plane nosed down and with engine full on she bucked like a broncho, but Eielson, never losing the upper hand, held and guided her splendidly around the rugged mountain-tops. We came down to within a few

feet of the ice-strewn water near the coast where the surface wind was furious and the salt spray, whipped from the sea, filled the air. Over the land the snow drifted high and thick, precluding a judgment of distance.

A patch of smooth, snow-covered land was passed in an instant's flash and dead ahead loomed a mountain. With an adroit swerve of the machine Eielson avoided it by a narrow margin. We could see that it would be dangerous to follow the coast too closely so we swung broadside to the wind and crabbed our way out to sea. But the sea held for us no haven of rest or safety unless, forsooth, it should be a long, long rest. It soon became evident that what we had missed was a small mountainous island, also that it was useless for us to remain out over the water. Back we turned towards the land only to be re-warned by the steep mountains. We were like an imprisoned bird beating against a window-pane.

We knew we were running short of gas and must land soon or be without enough to move again if we came down. We had no choice but to endeavour to relocate that one smooth patch of white of which we had caught but a glimpse. The wind-shield before Eielson was almost totally obscured with snow and frozen oil; his vision restricted to the little he could see through the small open windows and by looking first on one side and then the other. The windows of the cabin, flush with the fuselage, were clear of snow, providing me with a fairly clear outlook.

We hawked about this way and that. I passed note after note to Eielson as fast as I could write them :

"Turn right."

"Now to the left."

"A bit more."

"No, we have passed it."

"Turn back."

"Turn back."

"Keep as close to the land as possible."

"There it is on our right."

Eielson had little time to read my notes. Indeed, I marvelled that he could even spare time to grasp them, let alone follow their meaning, so busy he must have been with the controls of the machine.

We were past the place I meant almost as he saw it, so he swung once more out to sea in a narrow circle and heading into the wind came low into the teeth of the snowdrift. It was a right anxious moment for both of us. My face was

F.A.H.E.

hard against the window-pane as I tried to learn if the surface was smooth or covered with broken ice. It was impossible for Eielson to see, but with steady nerve braced for all eventualities he levelled the ship and lowered her gently until lost in the swirling snow.

We came smoothly to rest. Because of the high wind our ground speed, gliding with engine dead, was necessarily slow, perhaps twenty or thirty miles an hour. Even on the ground we could not judge accurately the force of the wind because of the blinding snow but it must have been unusually high and was such that the machine moved scarcely thirty feet beyond where the skis first touched. Once on the ground we could see no more than a few feet to each side of the machine. I flung the engine covers and an empty oil can from the cabin and struggled forward to empty the oil tanks before the oil should freeze.

"Open the tap," I shouted to Eielson and held the can under the drain-pipe, but nothing happened. Again I shouted my request as loudly as possible. But Eielson was temporarily stone deaf as the result of the constant throb of the engine. He could not hear a word and only when by signs was I able to make him understand, the oil flowed. The wind continued with hurricane force and high drifts soon formed. We stamped the snow about the skis so that it would freeze and prevent the ship from swinging or turning over.

Promptly as could be managed we threw the covers over the engine; first the one of canvas, then the waterproof, and tied them tightly.

We could convey our meaning to each other only by signs at first but, as had been the case last year when we had fallen through a dark, raging blizzard five thousand feet to the pack-ice, there was nothing we needed to discuss immediately. Silently we climbed into the cabin of the machine and brushed the snow from our clothing. "Thank God the machine's safe," I screamed in Eielson's ear. He nodded solemnly. The minds and hearts of both of us were too full of thankfulness for conversation even if hearing had been easy.

The plane rocked and trembled in the gusty wind. I reached for the remainder of the lunch provided for our use during the flight, and we munched dry biscuit, chocolate, and pemmican. There was still in my thermos bottle enough hot coffee for a swallow each. Ben had a few cigarettes in his pocket and after a smoke we settled down to rest. Neither of us, I think, was physically tired but the strain of the last

two hours had told on our nervous systems. Sleep for a while was impossible.

It is interesting now, some time after the event, to compare our mental state at that time with what our attitude had been the foregoing year when after our forced landing we faced a long walk home. Last year in our machine when we were plugging wearily onward, hoping our gas would last until we reached our base or the land at least, our engine had suddenly quit. For twenty minutes we floated down through utter darkness, a grey forbidding darkness. Not black like a winter's night but a nerve-racking, sense-dulling density. Beneath us lay what? Rough ice we knew and perhaps a lane of open water. Injury, minor or fatal, seemed imminent, but we were resigned—helpless in the hands of our Maker, His to dispose of without effort on our part. There was nothing we might do to help ourselves.

But for the landing we made this year on Spitsbergen, we had to fight. Fight every inch of the way, anxious, uncertain, never quite helpless, but ever against tremendous odds. We had, as we sat in the plane, reached a position of safety not only for ourselves but for our plane. I cannot say which year, this or last, our prayer of gratitude was more earnest. Both times it was sincere

Our coast to coast, non-stop flight had been ended. We had been twenty hours and twenty minutes in the air. It was less than half an hour since we first sighted the twin mountain peaks, yet it seemed like an eternity to us. After a short rest Eielson began to regain his hearing and we commenced to figure out our exact position. From dead reckoning we reasoned we should be in the neighbourhood of Kings Bay, but the island we had seen in flight was confusing. There was no such island marked near Kings Bay on our chart. True, the chart we had was on a small scale, twenty miles to the inch, and small islands may not have been included in the drawing. The snow-covered mountains gave us no clue as to position for they were not indicated on our chart. There was nothing to help us until the sun shone, and even then our method of navigation was not considered to be accurate within ten or fifteen miles.

We wondered how much gas we had left. Eielson felt sure he had noticed on the gauge that it had registered at least twenty. It was too stormy to go out and see. If Eielson's estimate was correct there was no real need, for we



were on the west coast of Spitsbergen and either Kings Bay or Green Harbour must be within a hundred miles. Twenty gallons of gas would get us there.

We talked of the joy we knew our success would afford Allan Loughead, Jack Northrup, the designer, and each individual workman in the factory. They had laboured faithfully and well, and what is more, with most obliging and splendid consideration for our least desire. We knew that the Wright Company would be pleased because our halting successes and failures during the previous years had been no great achievement for their engines. Every one of our mutual friends was recalled one by one, and through our minds flitted silent messages to our individual friends. We had flown just about half-way around the world in one hop. We tried to make it seem real that at Barrow, Fred Hopson and Charlie Brower, whom we had left twenty hours before, would be eating breakfast while the inhabitants of Spitsbergen would be having their evening meal.

In an hour or so our strained nerves relaxed and we slept. When we awakened the snow was still drifting but more gently. We felt that we had taken a Rip Van Winkle sleep, but our watches showed that scarcely five hours had elapsed since our landing. The midnight sun struggled valiantly enough to promise that later in the day the clouds would be dispersed. We rested and slept again.

When we next opened our eyes it was to find the sun clear in the east and well above the mountains. With the bubble sextant I got a fairly reliable altitude of the sun. Our calculations and drawings on the chart placed us somewhere on a line that exactly followed the west coast of Spitsbergen. After a few hours, when the sun had swung to the south, another observation for altitude would enable us to draw another line on the chart and where those two lines met would be our approximate position.

The snow rolled along the ground but was not drifting high. We jumped from the machine to wander around and take stock of our surroundings, but a few steps from the plane told us that without snowshoes or skis we would not be going far. Each step let us down to our knees in the soft snow.

As we unfastened the skis from the cabin wall I was glad I had not yielded to my temptation at Barrow to reduce weight by leaving one pair behind. Looking north and towards the sea we saw a small round knoll a quarter of a mile

away and upon it stood a surveyor's triangular beacon of sawed wood, evidently placed as a guide to masters of ships that might pass along the coast. We snowshoed over and examined these evidences of human handiwork but they offered no clue to our position. Not a line or scratch was found on any of the timber. I had brought binoculars along and scanned the mountains and valleys to the east of us. Dancing above the low snowdrift were many dark objects quivering, lengthening and widening under mirage influence.

Far in the distance, across a bay or strait, we did not know which, we could see what looked like the houses of a village, but their situation in no wise resembled the conditions at Kings Bay, as we remembered it from an indifferent photograph. Neither of us had seen a picture of or knew what the conditions were at Green Harbour. Several times I turned to look at the dark objects floating as it were on dancing haze. Too often had I been fooled by mirages in the Arctic and other places to be concerned about these dancing forms. Under just such conditions I had seen palaces, ships, palm trees, and giant cities outlined above treeless, sandy plains or Arctic wastes. A mirage will throw up shadows resembling any known physical thing depending upon the imagination of the observer. We could not believe we had been lucky enough to have come blindly to within a few miles of a city, and there were no cities on Spitsbergen. We turned away from the mocking shadows.

Just outside of us in the sea stood a saddle-backed high island, and farther north the great peaks of another large island, the extent of which we could not see. The general direction of the coast gave us no hint. It is the same from the north to south of Spitsbergen. The only islands we found marked on our charts except Prince Charles Foreland were Amsterdam and Danes Island at the north end of Spitsbergen. It must be that we were near Danes Island, sixty miles north of Kings Bay. That didn't seem reasonable, for we estimated that we had followed the coast southwards for a matter of forty or fifty miles.

I walked to the foot of a mountain a few miles eastwards and saw that beyond it lay either a channel or deep fiord, extending for many miles. I could see no end to the open water. There was little time for observation. The snow, still drifting, was beginning to swirl high again, and I must hasten back and get a second sight and see where that would place us. I was so dead tired from my walk and the previous

day's exertion that my second observation of the sun was probably indifferent. They placed us on Spitsbergen, somewhere opposite the approximate middle of Prince Charles Foreland—between Kings Bay and Green Harbour. It seemed, although we had followed along the coast, we could not have come so far. The morrow might be fine and a definite position within fifteen or twenty miles established. There was little doubt that if we had fuel for an hour or an hour and a half, we could reach some habitation.

The wind had swung with rapid strides from the north through east to south-east, and it was now blowing a hurricane from that direction. The snow that had whisked by us as we landed the day before was now scurrying back in the direction from which it came.

All the next day the southerly wind continued, to later swing suddenly north again and beat down with a fury bringing icy chill. Our thermometers had fallen to the floor and broken, and we could not register the temperature except by feel. Until we knew exactly how much gas we had we could not afford to burn gasoline for fuel, so in a cup we burned some alcohol and melted snow for drinking purposes. We could have nothing hot in the plane, for the same principle would apply as regards the snow-house or tent. If we raised the temperature in the cabin the hoar-frost on its walls would make it uncomfortable. Another reason was that we did not need to heat our food. We had learned last year that we could manage very well with cold water, dry biscuit, chocolate, and pemmican.

But there were on the beach some logs of driftwood I had seen while reconnoitring, so the next day—although the snow whisked about and visibility did not exceed a few hundred yards—we ventured forth; hitched ourselves to logs of driftwood and dragged them laboriously through soft snow to a little rock exposure near the plane. It was useless to attempt to build a fire outside that day, but the wood we thought would come in handy to warm the oil and give a hot drink of chocolate, before we started out again.

Next day in a spell of calm weather, though still in snow-drift, we tried to build a fire only to discover that the wood we had strained to get was so salt and sodden it refused to burn even after being saturated with the old engine oil we had drained from the tanks after landing. An hour's effort produced only enough melted snow to miss quite filling our two thermos bottles with lukewarm water. For further liquid

we must resort to our small store of alcohol. The knowledge of this aggravated our thirst, but expending little energy, lying cosy in the cabin—our feet well covered in our sleeping-bags and our arms drawn inside our fur shirts—we needed little to eat or drink. The waiting was tiresome and we were restless.

We were somewhat anxious about the actual amount of gasoline. With the tail of the machine on the ground the gauges were not precise. The snow prevented our draining the tanks and measuring the gas in an empty five-gallon can we carried. We smoked the cigarettes I had provided for an occasion such as this. We had two cigars and one day we divided one cigar and each smoked one half. Patiently we waited for the weather to clear.

During a lull on Friday morning we measured the gasoline, running it through the carburettor to be sure that all we measured would reach the engine if necessary. Only five gallons ran from the two starboard tanks. There would be about the same quantity in the port wing tanks, for they were connected. Yes! Another five gallons were recovered, but our spirits sank, for we believed we had pumped the cabin tanks bone dry, and ten gallons, if we had trouble taking off, would barely take us into the air.

We were miserably down-hearted and dreaded to rip the seals from the dump valves of the cabin tanks. But we must drain every drop! Warily we set the can beneath and I pulled the rip cord. Much to our astonishment a full stream of gasoline came forth. Through a half-inch opening the five-gallon can was soon filled and there was more to come. Fifteen gallons. That amount was worth while, but how were we to block the pipe while the five gallons of gas we had extracted was poured into the upper tanks? We had but one can and nothing would stop the flow except some soft obstruction fitting snugly against the pipe. The only soft thing available was my hand. I slipped my mitten free and shoved my palm against the pipe. Gasoline ran down my shirt sleeve and evaporating decreased the temperature. It seems as if my hand would freeze solid before Eielson had time to drain the can and place it once more under the opening. We could not afford to lose the gasoline. Eielson made all possible speed, but I suffered excruciating pain and frost-bite before the can was replaced. Less than half a gallon more came from the tank. Still, it was worth it. I thawed out my hand and arm and the same procedure was followed on

the other cabin tank. We measured in all more than twenty gallons into the top wing tanks. We were confidently happy; twenty gallons would take us anywhere we wanted to go in Spitsbergen.

We climbed into the cabin, had a good meal of pemmican and raisins, and turned over for a comfortable sleep. We hoped the weather would clear by morning and we could get under way.

While we were sleeping the wind grew stronger and the rocking of the plane wakened me, but the storm was waning and I felt it could not last much longer. All Friday afternoon we tramped back and forth on the snow in front of the drifts that had formed immediately before the machine. We first broke down the snow with our boots, then slid back and forth on snowshoes until we had a hard runway nearly one hundred feet long. The wind blew strongly from the north throughout the afternoon and night and the drift was blinding, but it bowed along over the pathway we had made, leaving no ridges there, but polishing the surface.

We had sighted Spitsbergen 6.15 p.m., local time, on Monday, 17th April, and landed twenty minutes later. It was not until Saturday at 3 a.m. that the weather was again fit for flying. At that hour we climbed from the machine and cut and shovelled snowdrifts for six hours to clear the machine. At the head of the runway we made a downhill start. We planned, if we had no time for more accurate sights, to rise in the air and from an altitude observe the coast, definitely fix our position, and then choose our course.

We placed the stove beneath the engine. It was difficult to do this in a wind, but once in place, it gave no trouble. I heated the oil on the Primus stove in the cabin. We were soon to find that our decision not to land on the pack-ice with half a load had been very wise. The tanks now held only twenty gallons of gasoline. With that little for a load and two of us aboard the machine would not budge an inch. When I got out and pushed the tail she started fine, but to climb in as she moved was not simple. It was now that we felt keenly the loss of the block and tackle taken from our equipment at Fairbanks. It had been designed for just such an emergency. With the loose end of a bight in one hand and hauling on the free end of the tackle I could have, while in the cabin, exerted the strength of four men, and when the machine moved, drawn the block and tackle into the cabin

for further use. But that part of the equipment—invaluable where two men must do the work—was not with us and we had to make-shift without it.

Because the machine would not move with the two of us in it, I needs must get out and push on the tail. As she started I clung to the step and tried to climb in, but soon fell off. Eielson, unable to see behind, thought I was in the machine and took off. When he turned with the machine he saw me forlorn on the ice. He circled and landed.

I slung out the rope ladder I had prepared in lieu of the block and tackle, but I wasn't too sure that my ability as a sailor would enable me to gain the cockpit with the aid of a dangling rope in that low temperature. To cling to a rope and scramble into a plane in warm weather is one thing. To attempt the feat in a temperature below zero on a plane travelling at the rate of a hundred miles an hour is quite another. I hadn't the slightest desire to dangle like a puppet until I froze and then drop like a plummet to destruction. However, I decided to try it and to hang on at all costs.

We started again and as the machine gathered speed I climbed to the tail and from there struggled desperately to gain the cockpit. I had thrown off my mittens in order to get a good grip of the ladder. My hands were soon numbed with the cold and I could not readily grip the rope, so I grabbed hold of it with my teeth. A foolish thing to do, perhaps, but it seemed imperative that I cling to the machine. We had gathered much speed and Eielson, feeling the weight still on the tail, thought I was safe and took off. Just before he left the ground I realised that my chance of gaining the cockpit in the air was much too small and I slithered from the smooth, shiny fuselage, being struck by the tail and thrown to the snow. It was fortunate for me that the snow was soft. I was half buried and partially stunned from the fall. When the snow was freed from my eyes and mouth I found that I had escaped other injury, but every front tooth in my mouth was loose. Whether from the impact of the fall or from the grip on the rope I was not sure, but I think now it was the result of holding on to the rope.

Eielson, in the air, discovered that I was still on the ground, so he circled and landed again. The snow was by no means perfectly smooth and the wind was across the ridges, making it necessary to land at right angles to them. I trembled for fear the landing gear or the skis might break. I was directly before the machine as she landed. The sight appalled me.

It struck the snow and bounded over ridges like a frightened deer. The skis, slung and kept in tension with rubber cords, bounced and wobbled almost like the arms of an octopus. They wouldn't stand many more landings on snow like that.

It was hard to know just what to do. I was still a little winded from my fall, and dressed as I was in my flying clothes during my strenuous efforts I was wet almost through with perspiration.

We had been running the engine for almost an hour and had used nearly half of our precious gasoline. If we could not get off the next time I would take the tent, a rifle, and some food from the plane and Eielson would go on alone, either to Kings Bay or Green Harbour, coming back with a boat for me at some later date.

That would have been a desperate move. It would have been unwise for a party of two, situated as we were, to split. There was no forecasting what might become of either of us, but ours seemed to be a desperate plight. We could possibly have found our way to the mainland and along the coast to some habitation, but that would have entailed leaving the machine behind. Perhaps, only perhaps, would we be able to pick it up later in the season. We might have waited there with the machine on the off chance that a boat would come to our rescue. Sealing boats would occasionally pass that way, but busy as they are about their business they might easily fail to see our signals.

The third time might be the charm. I would hook one leg in the cockpit-opening and with my foot against the fuselage push with all my strength on the log of driftwood we had found and thus try to move the tail. In order to get a better start we lifted the tail on to a block of snow, putting the machine in almost flying position. Then I fixed myself and the stick, gave Eielson the signal, and he shoved the throttle wide open.

For a full minute we hung. I pushed and strained every muscle. The tail swayed the inch or so allowed by the play in the skis, but seemingly would move no further. Suddenly, with a slight lurch, she was free. I dropped the log, and with one leg in the cockpit and with hands on its open rim I dragged myself up, and regardless of bruises tumbled to the bottom of the cabin. Utterly exhausted, I was unable to answer Eielson's shout of inquiry, but he took off, hoping I was safe. Before he had time to circle I had let him know that I was aboard.

I wanted as soon as possible to get a general view of our position, but the warmth of my body caused hoar-frost to cling to and obscure the windows. It was useless to try to clean them and it was essential for me to see where we were and agree upon a course to follow. Just as I stuck my head through the open cockpit for this view, I heard Eielson shout : " What's that over in the bay to the left ? "

We had rounded the high point near which we had been, and were by that time at an altitude of almost three thousand feet. I looked to the left, and through wind-born tears saw two tall radio masts in the distant group of houses. It could not be Kings Bay. The shape and dimensions of the fiord disproved that. I ducked into the cabin and wrote a note to Eielson : " Must be Green Harbour. Go over and land where you think best."

We crossed over about five miles of open water, swung across a mountain-top and then planed down close to the ice. The snow surface on the harbour-ice was smooth and we flew beyond the radio masts for a mile, passing the immense surface machinery of a coal mine. Then, circling over the ice, we came in to land at the foot of the radio masts. Our flight from our base in Alaska to a town in Spitsbergen was ended.



# A CRASH IN THE MOUNTAINS

*By*

LOWELL THOMAS

“MY most thrilling adventure ? ” Well, it was on my twenty-five thousand mile flying-trip over Europe a few years ago.

We had made a forced landing, at the edge of the Andalusian desert, on our way from Alicante to Fez. Three of us occupied the plane : the pilot, a young fellow named Paul Noailhat, a mechanic from Perpignan, and myself ; I had left my wife in Paris to do some shopping.

During those many months of cruising over the skyways of Europe, like all who travel by air (especially passengers, who, unlike the pilots, have nothing to occupy their minds), I had spent considerable time—far too much, no doubt—in wondering just what it would be like to be in a serious accident. I had often wondered just how much would be left of any of us if the plane were to go into a nose dive and plunge to the earth. Well, I know now !

When the pilot returned from his trek across the hot sand in search of the nearest house with a telephone, the three of us stretched out in the shade of the lower wing for another half-hour, trying to get what relief we could from the furnace-like heat. We amused ourselves watching the antics of the Spanish peasants and children who soon gathered around. They frankly regarded us as freaks. To them we apparently had dropped out of the sky from some other world. But at 2.45 we heard the hum of the relief plane. A moment later we saw it circling in the cloudless sky, a mere glistening speck, a mile above us. Noailhat seized a pile of faggots that he had gathered, held them under the engine, opened a valve, and soaked them with gasoline. Then he ran out into the middle of the level space where we had landed, touched a match to

them, and sent up a column of smoke as a signal to let the other pilot know the direction of the wind and where to land. The second plane got down all right, and in it were the chief of pilots from Alicante and an expert mechanic. Instead of trying to fix our ship, they immediately switched the mail and all our baggage into their plane, the idea being that we could push on without any further delay while they could repair our disabled motor and then fly back to Alicante in the cool of the evening.

In fifteen minutes the five of us had transferred the mail, and Noailhat, the mechanic from Perpignan, and I were in the second plane ready to take off. Our faces by now were as red as fire from the blazing sun through which we had flown since early morning. Tropical helmets would have been useful on that jaunt because they are just as desirable in Andalusia during the summer months as they are in Africa or India.

Waving *adios* to the chief of pilots and his mechanic we went roaring across the desert. We had come down on a level stretch of twenty or thirty acres, but just beyond were big boulders, stumpy olive-trees, and a mule. We roared nearer and nearer the trees, and it looked as though we were going to pick up the mule on our nose and take him along. The plane gave no sign of leaving the ground, although we were running with the throttle wide open. It looked as though we were headed for a smash, the sort that Captain Rene Fonck had with his Sikorsky transatlantic ship at Roosevelt field. But Noailhat throttled down and switched off just in time.

Swinging her round, we taxied back to the other plane, and our pilot held a consultation with his chief from Alicante. Noailhat insisted that he had used every ounce of power in the engine. The chief then turned to the mechanic from Perpignan, who was sitting in the rear cockpit with me, and asked him if he was bound for Africa on company service and whether it would make any difference if he got out and waited a few days. Then he told him to climb out and thus lighten the load, but just as my fellow-sardine was throwing his leg over the edge of the cockpit the chief of pilots changed his mind, and told him to crawl back, and ordered Noailhat to take a longer run this time. He said that we ought to be able to get up more speed with a longer run, and thus manage to get into the air. If we could, why, it would be all right. If we failed, the mechanic would get out and fly to Fex a few days later.

So once more we went roaring over the bumpy field. This time we seemed to have better luck. Two-thirds of the way across the flat on the way to the olive-trees, she bounced into

the air and started to climb. My companion from Perpignan smiled and gave a sigh of relief, because he was anxious to get on to Fez and had no desire to be marooned in the Sierra Nevada. A few seconds later we were about three hundred feet above the olive-trees, but she was not climbing as she ought to. Then we started to turn to the right. There was something about the way we were turning that made me suspect that all was not well.

In turning in the air a pilot always banks over, tipping the plane either in one direction or the other. This is one of the elemental rules of travelling in three dimensions. But we were turning flat and swiftly losing flying speed. We got round and were facing in the opposite direction, when in what seemed like less than a split second she nosed down. The eyes of the French mechanic sitting facing me were wide with terror. He screamed. Then the crash came. There was a terrific shock and a roar. From blazing sunlight we had suddenly dived into a world of blackness. But this was not caused by my being knocked unconscious. It was merely that the plane, diving into the desert, had thrown up the earth like the eruption of a volcano. The moment we struck, the pilot yelled, the mechanic yelled, and for all I know I might have yelled too. At any rate, the same thought flashed into the minds of all three of us—that the plane was in flames and that we should be cooked alive.

We all three jumped from the wreck at the same time. Dived, instead of jumped would be the better word, but the accurate word isn't in any language. We each gave a wild leap and went over the fuselage head first. Never in my life had I moved with such speed. Scrambling to my feet I staggered a few yards to get clear of the plane, expecting the gas tank to explode. But the pilot and the mechanic stayed where they fell. Judging from the groans and cries both were considerably injured.

All this time the engine was making curious noises, like the death-gasps of some monster. Gasolene was pouring from the tank in cataracts. Fortunately it did not explode. This was mighty lucky and probably due to the instinctive act of the pilot in switching off his ignition the moment the plane nosed towards the earth. He knew what to do. This was not his first crash. Also the engine could not have been running long enough to get any of its parts red-hot. If it had, then the gasolene tank surely would have gone up and finished the job. I ran to Noailhat first because he had been sitting in the

front cockpit, the "golden chair," right behind the engine, and I imagined that he might be in far worse shape. He was holding his head. I pulled the mask off his face and saw a tremendous bulge in his forehead. He was also clutching his chest as though he might be injured internally. After hauling him out of range of the gas tanks in case they should have exploded, I picked up the mechanic, who seemed to be in equally great pain and had blood streaming down his face.

It was several minutes before the other two airmen whom we had left on the ground when we started and the crowd of Spaniards got to us. They were about a quarter of a mile away. At first the country-folk stood around, wide-eyed, apparently too frightened to offer any help. They acted, too, as if it was all part of a show that they had come to see. Our throats were choked with the dirt and sand that had flown up over us. I tried to get the peasants to go for water. Each one shouted to the other to do it and no one did anything. But the chief of pilots and his mechanic, who had come up a few minutes after the others, went off at a run.

As each minute passed, the injured mechanic, who had been sitting in the rear cockpit with his knees interlocked in mine, grew weaker and weaker, and his face began to puff up. Both eyes were swollen completely shut. I stretched him out in the shade of one of the smashed wings. The gasoline had emptied into the sand by now and there was no longer any danger of an explosion.

For the first five or ten minutes after the crash I felt no effects from it except that I was covered from head to foot with a layer of dirt. Apparently none of my bones had been broken and I was not cut. I had been too busy, vainly trying to do something for my far less fortunate companions, to think of anything else. But now that the crowd had gathered around and the other two airmen had gone in search of water, things began to swim before my eyes and I crumpled up for a bit. Sven Hedin had given me in Stockholm a copy of *My Life as an Explorer*, and the night before, in that little inn near the Marseilles airport, I had been reading the thrilling chapter of where he had got lost in the Central Asian Desert and of the horror of those days when they struggled across the sand-dunes without water and food and half dead. He had lost hope of getting out alive, and as he grew weaker and weaker he counted his own pulse as a scientist might watch the development of some laboratory experiment. I did the same, and it was

certainly doing the double-quick, almost too fast to count. Then the aches and pains started to develop, but at the same moment I felt a curious glow of exhilaration. I was hilarious and wanted to laugh—laugh in that idiotic way I had on another occasion when a dose of gas knocked me out on the Italian front. And when I looked over at the plane and saw how completely wrecked it was I wanted to do a Highland fling for joy. It seemed too good to be true, incredible, in fact, that any of us could have been in that smash-up and climbed out of that crumpled-up pile of wood and metal alive.

The shock had smashed the tail assembly and broken the fuselage as you would snap a stick over your knee. The wings were crushed and twisted. The undercarriage had been flattened out as though there had never been any. The mail and baggage compartments, shaped like torpedoes and suspended from the lower wing, had been smashed to smithereens, and the Moroccan mails were scattered all over the scene. Of course the propeller had vanished into thin air—all except a piece about eighteen inches long that I brought away as a souvenir. Even the engine had broken in two and lay there ready to be scrapped. Although we supposed that the pilot had cut off the engine, it still whined as the last few drops of gasoline trickled into the sand. Every part of that Breguet mail plane was demolished—except the two cockpits.

Fortune had certainly smiled on us, for our escape was about as miraculous as any escape could be. Our smash was the same sort of thing that happened to Commander John Rogers. When you go into a nose dive at three hundred feet above the earth there is no chance whatever to straighten out your plane, and generally you are in for it. You could not blame me for feeling happy. Had I been alone I would have danced for joy. But the sufferings of my two companions checked that.

While waiting for the water to come, I took several snapshots of the smash. When the crash came I happened to be holding my heavy Graflex camera on my lap, so it suffered very little from the shock. But Noalihat and the mechanic looked so miserable that I did not humiliate them by taking their pictures too.

In a little while the Alicante mechanic, with his big bandanna handkerchief tied over his head like an Arab chief, arrived with an earthen jar full of water. We poured some of it down the throat of the injured mechanic, who was unconscious. A motherly Spanish peasant woman moistened her

apron and held it against his throbbing forehead and washed the blood off his face.

We piled the scattered mails in a heap. Then in a springless Spanish cart, drawn by two ponies, we were hauled across the desert and over a bumpy road to the little town of Alicantrilla in the province of Murcia, about fifty miles inland from Cape Palos and the seaport of Cartagena. I had ended my jaunt from Paris to Fez in a lonely valley between two ranges of the Sierra Nevada mountains in Andalusia, land of the Moors, and within an hour's flight of ancient Granada.

In Alicantrilla they took us to the only hotel, a little two-storied Spanish inn called the "Hospedje y Casa de Comidas," where they gave us each a drink of cognac and a bed. Several Spanish doctors came, dressed my companions' wounds, closed their shutters to darken the rooms, and forbade any one to enter. That was the last I saw of them. I left them in the hands of the chief of pilots from Alicante. It was fearfully hot in Alicantrilla. I found it difficult to sleep because of new bruises that were turning up, so I caught a night train for the cool upper regions of the Sierra Nevada. Some months later I received a letter from Noailhat; he had recovered and all but forgotten the crash. The mechanic got well too.

That was the first trip on which my wife did not accompany me. I wonder if she had been the mascot until then? At any rate, I am glad she missed that crash, and glad that we happened to have it in a remote corner of Spain, where no news of it could have spoiled her shopping in Paris.

# CALLED OUT TO BE SHOT

By

PRINCE MOUSSA BEY TUGANOFF

*Prince Tuganoff is a Russian nobleman whose ancestral home is in the Caucasus. During the Russian Revolution, his sympathies were naturally with the White Army and against the Reds, and he was consequently in danger of arrest from the Cheka, an official Red Russia organisation whose work the Prince describes only too vividly in this account. Prince Tuganoff, after strenuous months of work, was resting at the house of a friend where he knew he was safe; but one day, straying by accident over the boundaries of the estate, he was promptly arrested and taken to the nearby town of Vladikavkas.*

THE headquarters of the Cheka were in the best residential quarter of the town, in the offices of the former financial administration. As I proceeded there with my escort of heavily-armed Red guards I passed several acquaintances, who gazed after me with horror or pity. The Cheka had only just been established in the Caucasus at that time.

I was conducted to a room in the large building where some personal particulars were noted, according to the information given by my guards. I was then searched, and all my possessions were taken from me. I had no papers on me and very little money, as I had been arrested while out walking, but the Reds confiscated a ring which I wore in memory of my mother who had been given it by the Tsarina.

Without having been asked a single question I was taken to a cellar—it was a peculiarity of the Cheka always to use cellars as prisons and places of execution. The door slammed behind me, and I stood in the half light for a few moments before I was able to distinguish my companions in distress. About a dozen men sat or lay on the dirty wooden benches which stood against the walls and formed the only furniture in the room. Our cellar measured about thirty feet by fifteen. High up in the

walls were tiny windows, through which we could distinguish the feet of passers-by.

Most of my fellow-prisoners were unknown to me. To have fought in the White Army or to be suspected of counter-revolutionary activities was a sufficient reason for arrest. Denunciation was the order of the day, and the Cheka had a wide-flung net of spies, agents and voluntary helpers who knew that they had only to denounce a personal enemy as a counter-revolutionary to get him shut up for several months, if not for ever. The paid agents worked for very little, and showed great zeal in bringing innocent people to execution. In Vladikavkas they had their own methods of forcing their prisoners to confess. If an admission of guilt was desired and the prisoner refused to make it, his family was arrested. The obdurate victim was then conducted to their cell and informed that they would be shot unless he gave the required information within a certain time. The prisoner was seldom intimidated into making any admissions, and both he and his family were shot. The same method was employed when a long-sought suspect could not be found. His relatives were imprisoned and only released when he gave himself up voluntarily, that is to say, when he surrendered to certain death.

During the first weeks of my confinement in the cellar a young Ossete of thirteen was brought in who had a brother who had fought under Denikin, and escaped into the mountains, where he was resisting the Reds with a few faithful companions. He would fall on small bands of them like an eagle from his rocky eyrie and shoot all who came his way. He proved impossible to capture, for he disappeared as soon as large bodies of troops went after him, and the Reds had therefore seized his small brother as a hostage. He was with us for a few days only, but in this time we grew to marvel at the child's courage. Constantly submitted to harsh questioning, he refused to reveal his brother's whereabouts, and even kept silent in our presence. He was silent to the last when they fetched him for a final questioning. Later, we heard the shots in the next cellar which killed him.

On my entry into the cellar I had at once been greeted by a former captain in the Kabardian regiment in whom I recognised a brother of Saurbek. He was fresh and cheerful as in the old days, and informed me with joy that his brother was still in the mountains, busy trying to make the Red conquest of the Caucasus as difficult as possible. Knowing Saurbek, I felt sure he would succeed in his aim. The Captain was taken away one



day without even being examined and sent to forced labour in the Don region, the equivalent of a death sentence, but a lingering death instead of the merciful swiftness of a bullet. The men condemned to this labour could count themselves lucky if a minor delinquency put a bullet through their heads before they set out on the terrible road which led them through inhuman tasks, ill-treatment, hunger and cold to death—from privation or injury.

I also found a very fat, very rich Armenian in the prison whom I had known previously. He had been famous for his luck at cards, about which there were rumours, though nothing had been proved against him. He introduced me to a young man wearing the uniform of a Russian officer without epaulettes. This was a member of the Falzfein family who had possessed enormous estates in South Russia, the greater part of which was preserved for shooting. They had bred every imaginable kind of game there, including foreign birds which they had acclimatised. Sprung from German peasants, the family had been ennobled by the last Tsar. Falzfein had many interesting things to tell of the estates, and I talked with him for some time before learning, to my boundless astonishment, that this prisoner was none other than the Commandant of the Cheka who had committed some minor fault and was in custody for a few weeks. I was told that it was not uncommon for officials of the Cheka to expiate small delinquencies in their own prisons. After a week or two they were released and went on with their duties. Although Falzfein did his best to get me condemned to death, as I found out later, this did not prevent him from rewarding my amiability to him during his confinement with presents of cigarettes when he was free once more, and these were naturally received by us prisoners with great pleasure.

Every morning an old general, the former military commandant of Vladikavkas, was fetched from the cellar to spend the day sweeping the streets under close guard. He was brought back in the evening. After six endless weeks I underwent my first examination by three Chekists. It had no important results. They merely wished to know whether I was really a Tuganoff, a sufficient reason in the opinion of my "judges" to shoot me without further delay. I was then taken back to the cellar to meditate on this chill assurance. By this time the room had filled up. We had been about twelve men there when I first entered it; now there were forty or fifty of us crowded together in the narrow cellar. We

could scarcely move, and there was not room for nearly all of us on the benches. In order to leave some floor space to lie down on, as many as possible lay on the benches; the others made do with the bare floor, for there were no mattresses or coverings. The only protection we had against the concrete floor was our own *cherkesskas* or other garments, which we rolled up to use as pillows.

There were practically no facilities for washing. Once a day we were conducted to a pump where we could quickly rinse our hands, but no more. We were almost eaten alive by vermin: when I passed a hand over my head, lice swarmed over my fingers. There was nothing we could do to free ourselves of these parasites.

For breakfast we got hot water and a small piece of black bread, damp and sour smelling. At noon a watery soup was provided, with scraps of fish or high meat in it, and in the evening the meal was a repetition of breakfast. You had to have an iron constitution to survive even the nourishment, never mind anything else. Officially the prisoners were allowed to receive food from their relations, but if there happened to be anything that the warders fancied we did not get it. On one occasion we received some melons and cucumbers which caused an outbreak of typhus and cholera in our cellar. No medical aid was available for betrayers of the people, so the sufferers just lay miserably on the floor until they died. We could do absolutely nothing to lighten their suffering.

After the last meal had been brought to us the doors were locked, and from seven o'clock until morning we were shut in with ourselves. In one corner stood an appalling bucket which had to serve all our needs, including those of the mortally sick who could hardly crawl. The stink of this primitive arrangement combined with the sweat of about fifty unwashed, close-packed men in the almost unventilated room, made the atmosphere so hot and nauseating that every breath was torture. Most of the deaths took place in the evening after the doors had been locked, so the bodies could not be taken out. We had several corpses among us nearly every night during the epidemic, and as there was no room to lay them apart we were obliged to lie near them all night, feeling their limbs gradually stiffen and grow cold.

In the morning the dead were dragged outside and new prisoners brought in. Condemned men were called out "with their things," a phrase which meant certain death. Day after day passed in this manner, and we were not even permitted

to enjoy our short periods of broken sleep. In the middle of the night the door would suddenly be flung open and a name called out in the dark : For night trial ! These questionings were the worst of all. Hardly any one who was taken away in the night ever returned, or if he did, it was only to be called out " with his things " next day. He had " confessed," in what circumstances one could only imagine.

In one new batch of prisoners was the son of the landlord of the building in which the Cheka was housed, a pleasant young man of about twenty-two. He was called for night trial before he had been in twenty-four hours. Knowing what lay before him he screamed and fought, but his executioners were too many for him. They overcame him and dragged him away, a string round his neck like an animal. As he continued to struggle the commissar lost his temper and, drawing his revolver, shot the boy through the head.

Ten young officers of the White Army were brought in one day, sent from the Rostoff Cheka. The air of youth and hopefulness they bore did us all good. They looked curiously at our benches, observing every detail, and started to settle themselves in. They said they would stick together and live in the same corner. They knocked in a couple of nails on which to hang their things, and congratulated themselves that there was much more space here than in Rostoff—fourteen men had been shot the day before. At four in the afternoon they had come in, and by evening they had won the hearts of all of us with their youthful, carefree ways. Then a step was heard outside, the door flew open and all ten of them were called out " with their things."

In the next door cellar the women were imprisoned. They received the same treatment as us, and had also to clean the Red barracks as we did the courtyards. As many women were shot as men.

Among the prisoners was the Ossete general, Koranoff, a well-known personality in the Caucasus. His story was one of continual success and advancement. Under General Skobleff, the hero of the Russo-Turkish war, he had been a private soldier, and had attracted the eye of the general one night at a party by dancing a lesghinka with unusual skill. Skobleff remembered the grace and agility of the young Ossete and promoted him to officer's rank in the next campaign, when he proved himself a doughty fighter. Koranoff's fortune was made. He rose steadily until he was a general, although he could neither read nor write and was barely able to sign his

name to papers. He had no patience with schooling, and endless anecdotes were told of him. One of these related that on the occasion of the anniversary of Shamil's capture, when Koranoff was invited to the festivities in Petersburg with other Caucasians, he enjoyed the banquet so whole-heartedly that he left the room with full pockets. He had laid in a store of good things to last him for several days.

His courage and daring in battle were proverbial, but he seemed to need the atmosphere and the companionship of the battlefield in order to be brave. In prison he broke down completely, and if I had not known his story I should have found it difficult to believe that he had ever been a brave soldier. He had concealed an ikon in his pocket when he was captured, and he now hung this up in a corner of the cellar and spent the whole day on his knees in front of it.

The rumour used to go about that he had served two masters and acted as a go-between for the Russians and Caucasians. Whether this was true or not, the leading Caucasian families would have nothing to do with him, and even before the revolution the Russians had treated him with suspicion. Our gaolers took special pleasure in baiting him and intimidating him, telling him every day that his death was imminent. Although we all knew that our days were numbered, such assurances never failed to make a painful impression. As soon as the doors closed behind the warders again, the general would fall on his knees and start praying with renewed zeal.

I had been two months in the Cheka prison when one night my name was called for night trial. I went hot and cold. This was the end. I had only one wish : that it should be a bullet which ended my life.

I was led across the courtyard by armed guards. It was a warm night with a full moon, and life seemed very good. On a wooden block in the yard a young woman was sitting, a guard stood near her. She was obviously waiting to be questioned. The moonlight fell on her face and I saw that she was an old friend, the daughter of a landowner in the Don region. In the old days I had often stayed with her father and had been very fond of the beautiful young girl. It was years since I had heard anything of her, though I knew that she had married. I trod softly as I passed her, for it would have been impossible for me to speak to her. I do not think I could have got a word out.

I was taken to a brilliantly-lit room which hurt my eyes after

the long confinement in semi-darkness. The usual questions about name, army service during the War and the Revolution, and my relations with the people were put in a harsh voice. Then came the fatal accusation: I had supplied Denikin's army with horses and provisions, a capital crime! Lies would not have helped me, for any one who was called before the night tribunal was condemned beforehand. To my surprise, however, after a short conference among my judges I was taken back to the cellar. My guards told me that the three Ingushete officials had decided to search the records in case anything more serious came to light which would make my case harder. It was the only case I ever heard of in which they bothered to look for genuine charges. Naturally they found nothing, for all my own papers had been destroyed, thanks to my Ingushete friends.

Meanwhile I remained in the Cheka. The terrible days and still more frightful nights followed each other monotonously. Our only diversion was the old general who swept the streets. His humour and calm demeanour under adversity were an example to all of us. Another fellow-prisoner was the Metropolitan of Vladikavkas who did his best to comfort us, and promised us better times soon. After a month or so he was given clerical work to do for the Reds, who lacked educated men to such an extent that they were sometimes reduced to getting the prisoners to write out orders and notices for them. When the Metropolitan had been working for them for a time he abjured his faith and went over to the so-called "New Church," which was tolerated by the Bolsheviks because it considered the Soviet regime to be heaven-sent and assisted it to overthrow the Orthodox faith. The former prelate was given an excellent position in his new church.

*While he was still one of us he had been the only one to talk to an extraordinary prisoner who had been brought in stiff with filth and clad only in a ragged loin cloth. He pretended to be mad, muttered incomprehensibly, smeared dirt on his bread, and was so unmanageable when questioned that he was briefly listed as "an idiot of unknown origin." The Metropolitan succeeded in getting him to talk, and informed us that the man was a member of the Georgian royal family, a Prince Emeretinski, who had been living in Switzerland and had now decided to make a bid for the empty throne of Georgia. His madness was almost entirely feigned, for if the Reds had had the slightest inkling of his identity he would have died at once.*



*I recognised in this tragic figure the daughter of an old friend.*



Another prisoner, the Cossack Colonel Antonoff, who had belonged to Denikin's spy service and caused the death of numerous Reds, was condemned to death. He had often looked death in the face, but now, when he was to be executed, his nerves betrayed him and he begged for mercy from the Commissar who had to order the firing squad to shoot. He even cheered the Soviet regime loudly, but loud laughter was the only answer which the Reds gave him, and this was drowned by the report of the guns.

A lieutenant of the Kabardian regiment was fetched for execution. Not a muscle moved in his face. He calmly drank the rest of his hot water, took a purse from his *cherkesska* and handed it to a friend. "Send this to my wife if you can." Then he went quietly away as though nothing unusual was happening. Soon after we heard the shots crackle in the next cellar.

Two generals whom the Reds specially disliked had their "gloves" taken off before execution: that is, they stripped the flesh from their elbows down to their hands.

When there had been a number of executions the Bolsheviks had some difficulty in disposing of the bodies. They simply gave each of the condemned a spade, conducted them in orderly ranks through the streets to a field, and told them to dig themselves a grave. When this was done, the men laid their spades tidily on the mounds of earth and stood in front of their graves. If they were not killed at once they were buried anyway. A Georgian colonel and his adjutant were buried alive, and when some curious Chinese dug them up again they found the two unhappy wretches clasped in each other's arms.

At my third examination they were most friendly to me. I was told politely that I could do something to relieve my situation if I would give the names and present whereabouts of the Whites in the mountains, and their leaders. When I remained silent, equally politely, I was taken back to the cellar. Next evening I was summoned "with my things." As I had no things I went with the other condemned men to the execution cellar. I was quite calm, and did not greatly care what happened to me after those months in prison. To be dead and at peace at last would have been happiness. I was left to the last, and after the others had been shot, the Commissar in charge turned to me and shouted at me to go back to my cellar. I was to remain alive.

No doubt this little joke gave the Commissar great pleasure,



for he repeated it several times, on the third and fourth occasions even telling me to stand up against the wall and then letting me go with loud laughter. He might have been less amused if he had known how completely indifferent one grows to such jests after several months in prison.

The Heads of the Cheka, with the exception of Falzfein, were all Letts of an incredibly low type. Their people had been serfs for so many centuries that now they found themselves set over their former masters they were delighted to have an opportunity of getting their own back. All their basest instincts came to the fore, and they thoroughly enjoyed ill-treating and killing the hated "lords." The actual executioners in Vladikavkas were Chinese, from the Red Chinese labour battalions, who had overrun Russia during the War. They killed hundreds of men with stupid, indifferent, machine-like competence.

Three-quarters of the prisoners in Vladikavkas were Circassians and Ossetes, mostly older men, for the young ones had escaped into the mountains, where they were carrying on intensive warfare against the Reds. My seventy-year-old uncle was confined in a neighbouring cellar, but he was finally released. An old friend of his, a Turkish minister, was passing through Vladikavkas on his way to Moscow for some negotiations with the Soviet, and learned of my uncle's fate. He set the official machinery in motion and worked so hard that he obtained my uncle's freedom. The latter did all he could to get me liberated, too, through the Turks, but in vain. The only result of his action was that I was moved into an upper room where there were, if possible, even more prisoners than in the cellar. My new companions told me that we might be sent to a concentration camp in North Russia.

This turned out to be true. One day about five hundred men and women were assembled, of whom I was one, and we were taken under close guard to the station.

\* \* \* \* \*

In a siding at the station stood several cattle trucks, our home for the next few months. As many women as could be crowded in were packed into one truck; the rest of them were divided up amongst the men's trucks. Throughout the endless journey we lived side by side in the most uncomfortable and uncivilised conditions imaginable, yet I never heard a man utter an unseemly word to a woman or behave in any but the most correct manner possible under the circumstances, although nearly all the men had been through the war and

become coarsened by their experiences during the last few months. I noticed particularly that my Circassians were always considerate and careful with these unfortunate women.

The news of our impending departure had spread in Vladikavkas, and relations and friends of many of the prisoners came to the station to bring us small gifts and comforts. Some of our guards proved susceptible to bribes, and permitted food and blankets to be passed to us in the trucks. Others merely laughed mockingly at the efforts of our friends to relieve our discomfort, and sent them all away. My truck was one of those into which no one was allowed to penetrate.

Before we left I had an unexpected encounter. In 1913 I had married, but my wife and I had separated after a short time and I had not heard of her since. Now I suddenly caught sight of her at the station in the crowd which had assembled to see us off. She must have heard of my imprisonment, and come to see me for the last time. She was trying in vain to approach my truck, but she could not get near enough to speak to me, and we had to content ourselves with waving. I had no chance to thank her for her kindness in coming.

After a wait of several hours our train began slowly to move, and presently we were rolling northwards. To us who had been shut up in a cellar for so long the journey seemed, to begin with, almost enjoyable. At least we had fresh air, the weather was still warm and the people at wayside stations did everything they could to show their sympathy with us. In Terek, Kuban and the Don region, at every halt they brought us bread and fruit, sometimes even cigarettes. The guards allowed us to take the gifts, for the Bolshevik hold on this part of the country was not yet firm enough to permit the usual stern measures against the people.

The snow-clad peaks of the Caucasus disappeared slowly below the horizon ; every turn of the wheels took us farther from our homeland, which so many of us were destined never to see again. Our situation grew worse and worse as the days passed. The inhabitants of the country through which we passed became indifferent as we went north. They no longer brought us comforts, and began to be hostile in their attitude. Soon we saw undisguised hatred in their eyes as they stared at us fanatically, their faces pinched and haggard from hunger. The children looked half starved. These representatives of the proletariat, whom the Reds claimed to have freed, were completely demoralised by the new regime. True, the Russian villages were poor and dirty before the revolution, but

there had not been this dull stupidity, this animal indifference towards poverty. The sole means of subsistence which the Reds had left to these starving people was envy and poisonous hatred of the other classes. As soon as they saw our officers' uniforms they broke out into insults and curses.

As the season advanced it began to be cold. We had no adequate protection against the rigours of a North Russian winter, and the women in particular, who had been arrested in light summer clothes, without coats, suffered terribly. There was actually a small iron stove in each truck, the fumes from which had no means of outlet except through the roof. But as we had no fuel this did not help us much. Our guards were properly clothed and nourished, and so could stand the cold better to start with. When they, too, began to suffer from it, they allowed us to get down at the frequent stops we made in open country and collect firewood. Then we could enjoy for a few hours at least the inestimable joy of a warm car.

Our rations consisted of hot water and watery soup, with rarely a scrap of bad bread. Our only luxury was salt herrings, which, judging from their smell, must have been of legendary age. To render them more edible we used to lay them on the stove when it was burning and give ourselves the illusion of eating fried fish. At the big stations a group of prisoners was sent under strong guard into the town to buy food for the next stage. On these expeditions we met with such indescribable outbursts of rage and hatred from the people that our guards had difficulty in protecting us from them. Not that they cared what happened to us, but they would have got into trouble if they had returned to the train with one man missing.

Every morning and evening we were made to get out and stand for hours in the freezing cold and biting wind of the steppes until the conductor of the train was pleased to take the daily roll-call of the prisoners. A couple of days' journey from Moscow ten men from one of the trucks managed, Heaven knows how, to cut a hole in the side of the wagon and jump out on the line in the night while the train was moving very slowly. Their guards were asleep and their flight was not discovered until next morning. The conductor of the train assembled us all, and while the guards covered us with their rifles we had to watch the remaining occupants of the truck being almost thrashed to death. When it was over they could not stand or move. We dragged them back into their trucks, where many of them lay for days between life and death.

We could only leave the train during the morning and

evening count. There was no possibility of washing. If the vermin in the Cheka cellar had been a plague, here it was a maddening torture. The women in our truck got to such a pitch that one day they tore their clothes from their bodies, unable to stand them a moment longer.

On 1st November, in a blinding snowstorm, we drew into Moscow, where our train halted in a deserted siding at the goods station. We remained for days in biting cold and darkness, for very little light filtered through into the closed trucks. A feeling of profound hopelessness overcame us gradually as we sat there, for we had heard that our destination was to be Archangelsk where they needed men for tree-felling, sawing, and other work at the lumber mills. So many prisoners had died there that fresh supplies were urgently required. It was a great relief when at last we started again, and two men from the Baltic, who knew the line, told us that we were going westwards.

More endless weeks of hunger, dirt, cold and hardship went by until one day we arrived in Pskoff, a small town on the frontier of Esthonia and Latvia. We were told to get out of the train. The scene at the station was not without its comic aspect. In front of the little station building an entire company of soldiers with machine guns was drawn up, no doubt to impress us with the might of the Pskoff military resources. I can hardly believe that we, sick, starved, and half dead from the sufferings of the past months, constituted any very grave danger to the town Soviet.

We were assembled and conducted by guards to the Cheka. A great deal of comment was aroused when my Circassians carried the few belongings of the women and the sick, who could hardly crawl. Such gestures of politeness were evidently unknown under the new regime. Only those prisoners who were to be shot, and the women, were kept in the Cheka. The rest of us, who were apparently to remain alive, were taken with elaborate precautions against escape to a suburb of the town, where we halted at an old convent. The building was surrounded by high walls, and machine guns threatened us from roofs and doorways. Guards were posted at regular intervals round the walls.

The worst of our suffering seemed to be over. The nuns' cells were not exactly comfortable, but we had benches to lie on, and there was a squat little stove in each cell like those in Russian peasants' houses on which the whole family sleep in winter. The Russian and Baltic prisoners did not suffer as

much from the cold in these Northern parts as did the Caucasians. Necessity made my Circassians inventive. They first burned every scrap of wood and rubbish they could find in the convent garden, then when that was finished, descended into cellars and climbed to the attics in search of packing cases or anything else which would burn. In this way we managed to get through the winter.

The chapel and refectory of the convent were fine, large rooms which the sisters had done everything possible to beautify and decorate. There were times when we were almost happy there, specially when we got a meal which seemed far too luxurious for prisoners of the Cheka. On the very first night of our confinement in the convent we were astonished to receive an edible gruel and really hot tea. The extravagance of our gaolers even reached the point, from time to time, of providing us with sugar, meat, and fish, and the bread was quite good. We began to recover a little from our privations. I had never slept so much in my life as I did in that Pskoff cloister. There was nothing else to do with the time.

The same scarcity of clerks was making itself felt among the Soviets here, and they also needed carpenters, builders, and blacksmiths. They took to recruiting them amongst the prisoners, and gradually more and more of us were set to work in the town. These workers were even paid a small wage, enough to buy tobacco, which they brought us as a very welcome gift. But what tobacco! The only kind obtainable was the stinking "Macherka," the coarse stalk tobacco of the Russian peasant, which was so hard and thick that no cigarette paper would hold it. In any case, we had no cigarette papers, and were reduced to stripping the paper from the walls to roll our tobacco in. Only inveterate smokers will understand that even these cigarettes were a great comfort to us.

The commandant of the convent, and also of the town, was as usual a Lett, but an exceptional one. Although he was an ardent Bolshevik, I never heard of a single injustice or cruel action under his rule. He was an idealist who could still see a rosy future for Communism. He was extremely vain of his uniform, and saw to it that it was always in immaculate order, *likewise his long red beard, which looked most odd on the little man.* He had been born in the Caucasus, and had retained a deep love for our mountains and a great respect for the Circassians and their history and legends. He was delighted *to have real Circassians near him.* He used to come and see

me whenever he had a free hour, and get me to tell him stories of our country and people. He even wore a Caucasian sword-belt with his uniform. One day he brought me his *shashka*, his sword, and asked me with some embarrassment whether there was among the Circassian prisoners one of the famous Caucasian silversmiths. He would so like to have his sword hilt decorated in the Caucasian way. I was glad to do him this favour, and got one of the men to make him a fine silver mount. From that day he had full confidence in me, and used to tell me all his troubles.

The unrest in the town was very serious at the time. Crimes of every kind were committed every day, and the few military officials were quite unable to cope with the situation. They were obliged to close their eyes to many of the activities of the baser elements in the town. Finally the commandant came to me, a beseeching look in his little grey eyes, and asked if I could persuade the Circassians to undertake the policing of the town. They would be well paid, and free to act as they saw fit, and to move about at will. It was the last consideration which led me to agree to his proposition, for it might prove the only way in which my Circassians could regain their freedom, and perhaps in the end their homes. I therefore consented, and pointed out about fifty men whom I thought reliable and suited to the work. They started at once, but within two days had come back to me in a great state of agitation.

Murder and blood feuds were well known in the Caucasus, but the crimes they had to witness here were something entirely new to them. They had seen murderers torture their victims in the most horrible way, and even mutilate the corpses after death. And, which was quite incomprehensible to a Caucasian, they had seen men murder women. They could not understand it, and declared that they would only carry on with the policing of the town for the Reds on one condition : namely, that they should be allowed to punish such crimes instantly and without trial. This was granted to them, and from then on the worst criminals were shot immediately.

One day a Commission arrived from Moscow to investigate the situation and employment of the prisoners. They must have looked up my previous record, for after the departure of the Commission I was appointed, to my great surprise, as a "specialist"—that is, specialist for the care of horses. I was made inspector for the government of Pskoff. The breeding of horses had been much neglected since the revolution and the

Reds were beginning to be worried about supplies of remounts. The appointment seemed to me a gift from Heaven. Since I had recovered my health my thoughts had turned more and more to flight, but I had seen no possibilities of escape. Now the Reds themselves gave me a chance. I accepted the job with alacrity, but at first my every step was watched, so I had no alternative but to apply myself with zeal to the rebuilding of the Pskoff horse industry, and managed thus to avert all suspicion.

The offices of the different administrations for agriculture, fisheries, transport, etc., were all in the same building, and horse-breeding now took its place among them. I was given, as was usual with the Bolsheviks, an enormous staff of officials. I was given the rank of Commissar and a small salary, which I treated very economically in order to save some money for my flight. I no longer had to live in the convent but got a clean, well-furnished room in a cobbler's house. The shoemaker was a former non-commissioned officer of the Guards. His wife had been maid to a landowner's wife, but terrible privation had caused tuberculosis of the lungs, and she was now a very sick woman. These good people looked after me admirably, and I was thankful for their kindness after the experiences of the last years. As a Red Commissar I received ample rations, while the people starved, and my landlady was delighted by the rice, butter, sugar, and meat I was able to bring her—all luxuries which she had not seen for months.

In addition to my activities as a horse breeder I had other duties. I had to read the French newspapers and translate parts for the Russian Press. In this way I got some news of the outside world and could pass it on to my fellow-prisoners, who naturally hungered for it. My subordinates, who knew my title and former history, did not dare to protest against my authority. An order from Moscow was all-powerful.

I looked about me for experts whom I could set over the different branches of my department. All owners of horses had on a given day to bring their animals to these officials who selected the best for breeding purposes, listed the stallions and foals, etc. After I had experimented with the suitability of different stock as working or riding horses I assembled several small studs, and had naturally to make journeys of inspection to outlying parts of the country. At first I was accompanied by officials who had to watch me, but after I had provided the Commissars who were over me with good horses they came to the conclusion that I was trustworthy and

might be allowed to make my trips alone. I won the good graces particularly of one of the Pskoff Commissars, a Lett, who had married a baroness from Kurland. This clever and amiable woman was far superior to her simple, good-natured husband, and made use of the fact to relieve the situation of the prisoners and subordinates as far as she could. She earned many blessings from the less fortunate by her kind acts.

With me worked Colonel Roshun, who had formerly belonged to a Finnish dragoon regiment, and had reached the Communist administration in the same way as I had. He used to tell me about his fine estates in Finland, and his wife who had now been without news of him for years. He had been awaiting his chance to escape the country for a long time, and we decided to pool our plans. I had also found a young cousin in Pskoff, a girl whose mother had died in prison and whose property in the Caucasus had been destroyed. She was living with a very old aunt, and her future prospects seemed hopeless. I felt I could not leave her behind, and she was quite ready to brave the dangers of flight.

I started by asking places for both of them in my office. Cousin Marie became my secretary, and Colonel Roshib an expert assistant. I then obtained a pass which stated :

“Comrade Tuganoff is Remounts Inspector for the Government of Pskoff. He is travelling on official business with his assistants and his secretary. All posts and civil and military officials are requested to give him every assistance in the carrying out of his duties, and not to hinder him in any way.”

I chose a good pair of horses and took them with me. A foreigner who was working for the Bolsheviks but sympathised with our plan, lent me his servant, whom he could trust, as coachman and guide. Then came the day when I set out on one of my tours of inspection. My cousin's luggage was put into the carriage and we started southwards along the river Velikaya towards the Latvian frontier.

We were constantly stopped by Red sentries, but at the sight of my pass they let us go on. We drove throughout the day until, late at night, we came to a tiny village on the frontier where the coachman had already arranged the next stage with a reliable man. This was a rich peasant, who was waiting for us in front of his house where we were to stay until the following night.



I noticed as I greeted him that he was very drunk, but he proved a polite and considerate host in spite of it. He invited us into the house and set a copious meal in front of us with plenty of vodka, to which he applied himself with zest. We then went into the next room to sleep.

I was woken by loud laughter and talking. Our host had a visitor, a young Bolshevik Commissar of the neighbourhood who possessed a magnificent team of horses. The owner of the house told me afterwards that the Commissar came to see him every few days, ostensibly to talk to him, but in reality to enjoy the excellent vodka. Although our host had been drunk he had not betrayed a word about our presence, nor had he ever allowed his Tsarist sympathies to be suspected.

In the evening we drove to within half a mile of the frontier. From there we had to go on foot. Our host had arranged for men to be there to smuggle us over the line for a large sum of money. I was thankful I had saved my pay as a Commissar, for the usual contraband carried by these men was saccharine into Russia and flax back into Latvia, and they needed a large bribe to smuggle humans.

We walked through the bushes in silence, the only sound being a slight splash from our steps in the marshy ground. The actual frontier was marked by a stream which had to be crossed by a plank bridge. Our smugglers told us that the last lap which led past the Russian posts was unprotected, and that we must cover it with all possible speed. One of the men ran ahead to show us the way, followed by my cousin, myself, Roshin, and finally the other two smugglers brought up the rear carrying my cousin's things. We were almost across without any hitch having occurred, when by ill-luck Roshin lost his balance in the middle of the plank and fell into the water. It was not deep and we soon hauled him out, but the frontier guards had heard us and opened fire. Bullets whistled past us as we ran for the cover of a little wood which was actually in Latvia. We got there unharmed. We were safe ; Red Russia lay behind us !

# CANNIBAL GYMNASTICS

*By*

FREDERICK HOUK LAW

**M**ELANESIANS ! Dark, tall, muscular ! Great heads of crinkly hair making them look gigantic ! Dark bodies gleaming with coco-nut oil ! Faces streaked with paint ! Racial instincts going back over a thousand years of war and cannibalism !

Bamboo huts ! Clusters of thatched homes set irregularly ! Crooked paths and trails ! The roar of mountain torrents ! Sharp mountain peaks jutting blackly against the sky ! Jungle ! Jungle ! A tangle of forest, with murderous wild fig-vines crushing the lives out of tall ceiba trees !

A hot sun blazing down on a wild landscape ! Ridge upon ridge of mountains fading away into the blue distance, a maze of jungle, a maze of mountains, a wild, heartless, evil country where the spirits of the dead sigh through the branches of the great trees.

" Be careful when you go into that village ! They're a bad lot, those men ! You know where you'll sleep ? Don't mind it ! Ghosts won't hurt you ! They'll put you in the haunted hut—don't laugh !—the ghosts are there all right ! I know. They're there ! They walk about at night—two women, native women, you know, killed and eaten there long ago ! They bashed their heads in with clubs and ate them ! Their own people, too ! Now those women walk at night in that hut, the big hut ! They walk up and down, and wring their hands, and moan and cry ! They never touch any one, though—just walk and cry as if they didn't see you. Don't mind them—the living are the ones to be afraid of. Be careful. Agree with the people. Don't make them angry. Don't argue with them. Give them gifts. Flatter them. Tell them how good they are—and get out just as soon as you can, and be glad you're alive to get out."

Not very cheerful instructions

One night I sat down by a tiny fire with a circle of grizzled old warriors, every one of whom had eaten white flesh. The ends of two logs had been put together so that the ends burned slowly, making almost no smoke and almost no light, a cold, wicked fire. All around rose the dark trees, edging the impenetrable blackness of the jungle. Not a face smiled; not a voice showed pleasantness. In fact, there was scarcely voice at all, for the men spoke in low tones, and spoke little. They were eating slowly, drinking occasionally. I knew the name of that white man who had been clubbed to death and eaten. I knew the frightful punishment that had come upon the mountain people, their huts burned to the ground, their women and children killed without mercy, their warriors killed or scattered, everything that they had destroyed. They knew it, too. They hated all white men.

One dark, demon-looking warrior was the son of that cannibal chief who had treacherously struck the blow. Yes, he hated white men more than did all the others, for he remembered his father, and he had his father's fierce face and his father's wild wishes.

I sat with these men and ate and smoked, now and then speaking in a low voice, only to be answered by a grunt or a turn of the head. They looked at me with eyes that had no hint of friendship.

The village to which I was to go lay far beyond, over the mountains, through the jungles, across the rivers, far, far in the interior. Here with these men in the night there was ominous hatred; in the village—who knows what?

I went down endless slopes, threading narrow trails through the tangle of trees. Native carriers went with me, not one of them able to speak a word of English. One, the son of a chief, was lighter in colour, finer in features, showing, perhaps, Polynesian blood mingled with the Melanesian. He had the air of an aristocrat, the manner of a gentleman. At night, because I felt that I could trust him, he slept by my side, between me and all others. He was different from the others, who were darker and fierce-looking.

Day after day we plodded on. The little trails broke in a thousand places, so that it seemed impossible not to become *hopelessly lost*, but the natives never hesitated the slightest, either in the daytime or at night, for sometimes we had to keep on even in the blackness. On one such night, when I walked with the utmost care, guiding myself by the faint sound of bare

feet ahead and the steady roar of a mountain stream at the right, I stumbled over a log, groped for something to catch hold of, and fell headlong into the torrent. Instantly, the natives sprang to me and pulled me up dripping and ashamed. They had not fallen. Why not? After that they took me by the hand and led me. I moved my hand before my face, but I could not see it at all. The night was pitchy black, and a steady rain was falling. Nevertheless, those men *saw*. They spoke when we came to a stone or a rock; they walked on at a good pace, following the stream, following the trail, and finding their way down a mountain-side and at last to a village.

All that village lay silent in the blackness of night, not a light showing anywhere, not a sound rising, as we went past huts that I could sense rather than see, and came to the chief's hut.

Surprised but courteous in his native way, the old chief made me welcome, helped me take off the wet, clinging khaki, and brought coco-nut oil to rub me with. A dozen wild figures grouped together in the place by the smouldering fire. My "boys" took my tin of army rations and heated it, boiled water for my tea, and set my dinner before me. More than half of it I gave to the chief and his men, and they ate it with relish. It was meat! They were tired of roots and fruit, and they longed for meat. Eyes looked upon me from the half-darkness, dimly seen by the light of my lantern. I spread my blanket and lay down. The chief's son stretched by my side. The rain poured down upon the thatched roof. Rats rustled overhead. The ends of two logs smouldered and cast flickering, ghostly shadows. Still, lonely, and weird as it was, this was not yet the village against which I had been warned. That lay beyond.

The days passed, the nights came, the trails led on over ridges, down valleys, and through the jungles. Here and there clumps of wild taro raised their huge elephant ears. Sometimes, in such places, I saw bare-breasted girls digging for the roots. Sometimes these girls followed me into a nearby village, I at the head of the strange little procession, in stained khaki and dirty white helmet, my bearers following me with my bundles and camera, covered, perhaps, with a great banana leaf, and a group of half-naked, giggling girls following in Indian file. I could never see the procession, for when I stopped the procession stopped. I must go at the head.

I walked knee-deep in mud,\*forded rivers or was carried across them by my men, lay and slept sometimes on sunny

banks, wondered at the uncanny bark of birds deep in the jungle, ate refreshing wild shaddock, exclaimed at acres of huge, glorious flowers, enjoyed the beautiful green of clumps of new bamboo, and looked up at huge trees that had stood for years as the homes of spirits. Most of those trees were being slowly imprisoned by the wild fig that had crept up their sides as slender vines and then had spread and spread, flattening out and encircling the stem and the branches, eating the tree. All Nature here was cruel. All through the jungle banana stems tried to grow, but stronger plants shut off their light and starved them into stunted, fruitless beings.

Then, at last, I entered the village one should avoid. It lay in a hollow of the mountains, set far from ordinary reach. Since the earliest days its people had been noted for warlike spirit, cruelty, and unrelenting hatred of all invaders. The thatched huts stood here and there on a level piece of land not far from a rushing stream that battered eternally against black rocks.

A wild-looking man with unusually dark face met us on the outskirts, and pointed the way to the chief's hut. The chief himself, with several of his men, came out to welcome us.

The men were big, tall fellows wearing only hip-cloths, men with great arms and chests, heavy negroid features, and rounded mops of hair. Some of them had their faces blackened with soot or streaked with white. They were hard-looking, fighting men. The chief was smaller, with better features, and not at all fierce-looking; on the other hand, he was obsequious in a way that seemed to carry with it a sneer, although no sneer was to be seen. He was one of those men whom one instinctively distrusts.

"Welcome," he said. "All that I have is yours. Tell me what to do and I shall do it. If you wish to eat you shall have the best we have. If you wish to sleep my home is yours."

His words were perfect, his manner was perfect, but at the back of both was an unexplainable something that made him more threatening than all his retinue of fierce-looking warriors.

The ritual of the tribes demanded certain ceremonies when an honoured guest arrived, long and complicated rites held in a great hut with the circle of old men and leaders all present. I had gone through these ceremonies many times in other villages with other tribesmen, and I was accustomed to the words of question and reply, all in the native tongue.

On all other occasions I had felt harmony between the words and actions and the spirit, but now something was different. The courtesy was strained. Every native eyed me in a new way. The gifts were too great, the emphasis on friendship too strong, delight at my gifts too violent. It was as if every one of the old men and village leaders said, "We do all this for you, but we do it without our hearts. We are masters here, not you."

They pressed food and drink upon me until I could endure no more. I declined, with fresh thanks. They insisted. I put it aside. They glowered as if at an insult, and urged more and more. Were they purposely deriding me, laughing in their hearts? Were they trying to find occasion for hot words and thoughtless action? I remembered I had been told to do nothing to anger them.

Of course I had arrived at the end of day. The tropic night had fallen like a blanket. I lit my lantern and looked at the circle of dark faces, the gleaming eyes, the shining, muscular bodies, the masses of hair that made every man a giant in size. All those men sat before me and stared.

I lay down to sleep, having a raised platform at the farther side of the hut, put out my lantern—and wondered. All was silent, as if no other human being were in the hut. Not a breath, not the movement of a foot, not the crackling of a straw or twig—deep, black silence. I slept. From the deep sleep that follows hours of weary tramping over mountain-trails I woke with a bang, wide awake. Could it be! It was the very dead of night, and yet, out there in the hut, close to me, the men were singing. They had begun suddenly, and at the top of their lungs, with every intention of giving me alarm.

I coughed to let them know I was awake. The singing stopped as suddenly as it had begun. Again there was deep, black silence that lasted for a long time. Then suddenly, without being preceded by a whisper even, the wild singing rose again in one mighty chorus. What in the world could one do? Evidently they were bound to make things unpleasant. I was alone, no other white man within miles and miles across the mountains. They did not speak English. My knowledge of their language was limited to a dozen words, and those not at all suited to the occasion.

For a moment I wondered. Then quick temper came to the rescue and I yelled out in angry English, "Hey, you! Shut up! You want me to come over there?"

If they had understood they would have laughed. But they

didn't. All they understood was that I was angry and that I spoke as if I had power. To my surprise, one by one those fierce-looking mountain men, paint and all, crawled out of the hut without a word. Absolute silence reigned and I slept. Next morning I woke and looked in surprise at the sun. It had been up over two hours! There was not a sound anywhere. Was the village deserted? I stepped to the door of the hut and the place came to life with an actual sigh of relief. The whole village began to talk. It had been afraid I might scold it again! Psychology is a queer thing.

That day a new trouble appeared. Two men began to follow me about. I had no way of finding out whether they were guards or assassins. One had a long rifle—and natives in that place were not accustomed to have rifles. The other had a long, shining, wide bush-knife some three feet long. Both were big, tall men, shock-headed and wild. They kept just about twenty feet to the back of me wherever I strolled—and both looked at me steadily—and neither one ever smiled! I hoped they would smile, but they did not. They stared. I remembered every story I had heard about that village, all about its cannibalism, all about its unforgiving nature, all about its hatred of strangers.

"Might as well be now as ever," I thought. I went back to the two men, gave them some trifle or so, spoke a word or two of their language—and then deliberately turned my back squarely upon them and walked away slowly. I felt my backbone ripple in waves as it waited for the bullet or the knife or both together. Neither came.

Meanwhile the men of the village—for the women all kept within doors—stood and stared ominously at me.

Something had to be done. If I were to stay in that place much longer without some one smiling I should scream.

I remembered something I had done in Greece once, when I was held up by the cholera. At that time I had lined up some two hundred Greeks in a perfectly straight line, taking a long time to do it, and then I had made an idiotic speech to them while they stared and wondered whether they or I were crazy.

Now I did the same foolish thing. I took two of the half-naked savages by the arms, and got them to stand side by side. Then, little by little, I lined up all the rest with them. It got to be a long line, for the rest of the men in the place came to see what was going on. There it was at last, a long, straight line of wild warriors of the mountains. That was done! There was the line! What to do next? Speak to them? Absurd!

Suddenly an idea flashed into my mind. I remembered some simple gymnastic stunts I had learned in college, little muscular tricks that called for skill rather than strength. I did one of these, stopped, and motioned that all that crazy line was to do the same thing.

The men tried it. They fell over. They rolled on the ground. They bumped into one another—and the village laughed! That was good to hear.

I did more tricks of gymnastics, and the line of men reformed and tried again. Again they fell or tottered—and laughed. The ice was broken. They laughed. There was something that I could do that they couldn't. It amazed them that I should appear to be stronger than they—and they laughed at themselves!

I laughed, too, for certainly it was comical to see a long line of tall, muscular men, some of them barbarously painted, all of them half naked, all of them with great bushy heads of hair, every one of them looking what they all were, descended from a thousand years of war and cannibalism—it was comical to see such men reel and fall trying to do childish gymnastic stunts!

After an hour of laughter they showed me some of their tricks of strength—and motioned for me to do what they did. Then they laughed more than ever. Laughter had come into the village, and whatever had been there before had vanished. I had established myself as a man among men—or shall I say, as a cannibal among cannibals.

When I left that village and disappeared again into the welcome jungles, following my bearers, a long line of men from the village followed, even the men with the rifle and the knife. They went with me some way on the trail through the thick tangle. Finally we came to a brook. There they stopped. I shook hands, waved good-bye, and went on.

They laughed—there in the jungle those cannibals laughed. I have never been able to decide whether they thought me a crazy fool or a noble hero.



# GALES IN THE HURRICANE ZONE

By

ALAIN GERBAULT

*Alain Gerbault inherited a love of ships and the sea from his father. He was brought up at Dinard, where the Breton fishermen and their sons were his friends, and it had always been his absorbing ambition one day to own a little craft of his own. After serving in the Flying Corps during the Great War, he bought the Firecrest, a little racing cruiser, and this story tells of his experiences in the terrific gales he encountered in the Atlantic during his lone-hand cruise from Gibraltar to New York, when the wind almost stripped the Firecrest of her canvas and mountainous seas buried her under tons of water.*

THE 9th of August, sixty-four days out from Gibraltar, found the *Firecrest* about five hundred miles east of the Bermuda Islands, and approximately one thousand two hundred miles from New York, my port. So, judging by experiences thus far, I reckoned that it would require about one month more to complete the voyage; but, at the same time, I knew the past was no guide to what there might be to come.

There had been rain squalls and a very confused sea all night. The wind was westerly, very strong, and dead ahead. I had shaped my course to pass south of Bermuda, and cut the Gulf Stream so far south as to get the benefit of its north-easterly current in carrying me up to New York; so I laid the *Firecrest* on the starboard tack and headed her south-west.

The seas were running high and broke on board frequently throughout the afternoon. The deck seemed constantly under water. The narrow little cutter lay heeled over before

the blast as she drove into the seas, burying her lee rail at times several feet under water.

The deck was so badly washed that I had to keep the skylights and hatchways closed. This made it hot and uncomfortable below decks. Cooking under such conditions was a difficult task. My forecabin was just wide enough to stand in between the stove on the starboard side and the water casks and the galley on the other.

If, in a thoughtless moment, I set down a cup or dish, it was likely to be hurled spinning across the forecabin on to the opposite locker or the floor. My stove, too, had a habit of tossing a kettle of water, or a dishful of hot food, on my bare legs and feet: so I had to watch it carefully when the cutter was pitching about.

That day a huge whale swam swiftly across the bow of the *Firecrest*, making the spray fly in a turmoil. The monster was making approximately ten knots, and was very likely running before the sword fish, his natural enemies.

The gale continued throughout the night. I had put the *Firecrest* on the other track, heading north-north-west, and, after trimming the sails so that she would hold to that course, let her take care of herself while I got what sleep I could in a bunk that seemed to be trying to leap from under me.

I was up at four o'clock the next morning, and got on deck just in time to get the mainsail down before a heavy gust that whipped the sea into flying scud, and would surely have stripped the *Firecrest* of her canvas.

It was dirty weather. A vicious wind was driving before it huge waves with high curling crests like Kipling's white horses, and which bore down upon my lonely little craft as though bent on her destruction. When she plunged into them she buried her bow under a smother of frosty green water that raced along the deck and flew in a sheet of spray into the sails.

A great canopy of dull, leaden clouds hid the heavens from horizon to horizon, and battalions of stray storm clouds scurried past at lower altitudes, whilst gusts of rain pelted my face with stinging force.

I was drenched; washed alternately with spray and rain; but it was warm and I wore little clothing. In fact, clothing was of little use under such conditions, for it only would have served to keep me constantly wet. Without it I quickly dried off.

But there was nothing to lament over. This was the kind

of weather I had expected ; the kind that puts to the test a seaman's skill and endurance, and the staunchness of his craft. Far from being either distressed or awed by the majesty of ocean in a wrathful mood, I felt thrilled to the sense of combat. Here was something to fight, a worthy foeman, and I found myself singing snatches of all the sea songs I could remember.

“ For a soft and gentle breeze,  
I heard a fair one cry.  
But give to me the snoring breeze  
And white waves heaving high,  
And white waves heaving high, my boy ! ”

The *Firecrest* was plunging as though bent on becoming a submarine, and heeling heavily to the gusts. The gale was blowing straight from the direction I wanted to sail, and she had to fight for every inch she gained against it.

She was not making too bad weather of it, except for the strain on the bowsprit. She was constantly burying it deep into the sea and prising it out again. As she flung it clear of the water I could feel the whole rigging, mast, bowsprit and sails, jump, and the cutter shake from the sudden release from tension. My faith in the bobstay was weak, and if it gave way in one of those jumps the bowsprit might go by the board.

The waves were running so high that it was difficult to take an observation. Only when the cutter topped the crest of a sea could I get a glimpse of the distant horizon, even when the flying cloudwrack above opened to give me a chance to shoot the sun. However, I satisfied myself that I was in latitude 32.54, and longitude 56.30.

Going below, I discovered that the *Firecrest* was shipping a considerable amount of water. Yet the skylight covers were closed as tight as I could get them, and all openings shut. But the covers lifted enough when the seas broke over them to let a little water in each time. The result was that everything below decks was becoming saturated.

The gale veered to the south-west in the afternoon, but showed no signs of diminishing. At seven o'clock I undertook to reef the staysail, but it got loose and was ripping from foot to leech. It was difficult to make and take in sail or do anything on deck with the boat leaping about and so often raked with the seas ; but I managed to get the staysail below and roll the boom so as to show less mainsail.

Tired and soaked as I was I could not afford to rest while the staysail was split. It was too necessary ; so I stayed up nearly all night sewing it together again, and it was two o'clock next morning before I turned in. There was a succession of squalls throughout the night, so I let the cutter lie hove to, riding as easily as possible, but making no headway.

Next day the gale blew itself out, leaving a rough sea running. From now, and for about twenty-four hours, I had moderate weather, and took advantage of it to ply my needle repairing staysail, mainsail, and trysail by turns.

On Monday, 13th August, my observation showed that I had logged only about forty-five miles in twenty-four hours. I could not make much westing against these gales which were carrying me north of my course.

By the afternoon of that day the *Firecrest* was tossing in another fierce wind and rough sea. She laboured and pounded and buried her bowsprit in the solid green seas, putting a great strain on that stick and bobstay.

I was convinced by this time that a long bowsprit, such as the *Firecrest* carried, and the main gaff (boom across the upper part of the mainsail) were a couple of nuisances for a man sailing single-handed. I determined, therefore, to get rid of the gaff once I reached New York, and to carry instead a Marconi, or leg-o'-mutton mainsail, which should be balanced by a shorter bowsprit.

At last I gave up trying to repair one of the staysails, as it seemed likely to take all my twine.

Fierce seas broke over the cutter all that night. Next morning everything in the forecabin was wet from the water that had been driven in around the hatchway. On deck at four o'clock I found the *Firecrest* plunging into a strong head sea and trying to make what headway she could against the strong westerly gale. There was a good deal of water on deck most of the time, as the seas still broke over her.

The barometer was very low, indicating that conditions were going to be worse. Throughout the forenoon the gale kept increasing, until at 11 a.m. its force was tremendous, and things were in sad disorder below decks owing to the battering the little boat was receiving.

I had had difficulty in cooking breakfast, and was vainly attempting to boil rice for lunch when a green sea broke aboard and the kettle of hot water was tossed from the stove on to my knees. Going on deck to see what damage had been done, I discovered that the wave had carried away the

hatch cover of my sail locker, a compartment in the extreme after part of the boat.

Holes were beginning to show in the mainsail and staysail, so I had to take them in. This seemed a good opportunity to try out my sea-anchor, so I let her ride to it, with a spitfire jib to steady her. I found, however, that there was little difference in the boat's action, and that she could do nearly as well without it.

Many seamen claim that a sea-anchor is a great help in heavy weather when the winds are so high that it is impossible to carry any canvas to hold the vessel's head to the wind, but I did not find it so with my type of boat.

My experience appears to have been the opposite of nearly all that has been written about boats in heavy seas. In any case I think the so-called danger of being caught in the trough of the seas does not apply to such a small boat as the *Firecrest*, for I found it didn't matter much whether she was head, side or stern to the wind and seas when she had no way on. If she could carry any canvas at all, I gave her a reefed trysail and a spitfire jib and found the motion easier.

It was necessary to cover that sail-locker hatchway with something to keep the water out, so I plugged it with old sails in the best way I could.

Attempting to cook supper that night, the air pump on my stove, which forces the oil through a small hole in the burner, broke, and I had to give up cooking. Also, although dead tired, I spent nearly the whole night repairing the staysail.

The storm clouds cleared away next morning, 15th August, and the gale moderated a little. I had been letting the *Firecrest* ride to the sea-anchor while repairing the sails, but, just before noon, I hauled in the anchor with tripping line, got the mainsail and jib on her, and by noon was under way again, steering north-west.

This was the last occasion on which I used that sea-anchor. It had proved of no real use ; so why bother with it ?

Within twenty minutes after getting under way a squall struck the cutter and tore to ribbons the staysail that I had been working on for ten solid hours. It was gone in a twinkling.

The joke was certainly on me, and I was obliged to smile at the thought of all the hours spent sewing those rags together only to have them whipped away in that fashion. Then I hoisted a jib in place of them.

By this time I had been without sleep for thirty hours.

The *Firecrest* was taking care of herself, so I turned in and got a two-hour nap. Next day, in more moderate weather, I put things shipshape down below, throwing overboard the things I had found useless. This always gives considerable pleasure, for it is one of the joys of the sea that you are not obliged to keep with you things you dislike.

Dorados were still trailing the boat, but they were now too shy to be lured within reach of my harpoon. On the following day, however, I managed to coax one near enough to spear him. He was a foot and a half long. I thought of my actual superiority, but I thought, too, that some stormy day these voracious fish might have their turn in reward of their tenacity in following me.

The *Firecrest* was logged some fifty to sixty miles a day in the variable weather that now followed. Frequent squalls, often with heavy rain, kept me busy handling sails.

On 18th August the gales came on again; my sails began to rip; parts of the rigging broke under press of sail, and the leaping of the cutter added to my discomfort. The pump got out of order, too. The seas were also running high, and by night-time I was cold, wet, and tired, so took some quinine to ward off a chill.

The irony of it all was that after having been on short rations of water for a month I was now getting so much that I could not get rid of it. It was also impossible to keep the heavy rains and spray from coming through the sails with which I had plugged the sail-locker hatch.

The water had now risen to the level of the cabin floor, and, when the *Firecrest* listed, it splashed around in the lockers and bunks, wetting and spoiling everything.

On deck it was blowing a regular hurricane. The sky was entirely obscured with thick clouds, hanging so low and thick that it seemed like night. I had to reef the mainsail down until nothing was showing but its peak, the jaws of the boom and gaff being only four or five feet apart. The seas became so high, and the boat labouring so heavily, that it seemed at times as though she would jump the mast out of her. The rain, too, came in slanting torrents, driven before a stinging blast and almost blinding me. Facing it I could hardly open my eyes, and when I did I could have hardly seen from one end of the boat to the other.

For several days now I had been exposed to drenching rain and spray, the consequence being the skin of my hands had become so soft that it was very painful to pull on the ropes.

Neither the baffling gales that ripped the sails and set the lockers awash, nor exposure to drenching seas and cutting rains were sufficient to burn the sea-fever out of my veins. A man crossing the ocean alone must expect some distressing times. Sailormen of ancient times, who rounded the Capes of Good Hope and Horn, had to fight for their lives and suffered more from cold and exposure. I had a feeling, too, that there was a pretty good chance that some day the *Firecrest* and I would encounter a storm that we should not weather.

The gale continued throughout the night of the 19th of August. Sea after sea swept over the little cutter, and she shook and reeled under them. I was awakened often by the shock of the seas and the heavy listing of the boat.

It was a dirty looking morning on the 20th, and the climax of all the gales that had gone before. It was the day, too, when the *Firecrest* came near to making the port of missing ships. As far as the eye could see there was nothing but an angry welter of water, overhung with a low-lying canopy of leaden, scurrying clouds, driving before the gale.

By ten o'clock the wind had increased to hurricane force. The seas ran short and viciously. Their curling crests racing before the thrust of the wind seemed to be torn into little whirlpools before they broke into a lather of soapy foam. These great seas bore down on the little cutter as though they were finally bent on her destruction. But she rose to them and fought her way through them in a way that made me want to sing a poem in her praise.

Then, in a moment, I seemed engulfed in disaster. The incident occurred just after noon. The *Firecrest* was sailing full and by, under a bit of her mainsail and jib. Suddenly I saw, towering on my limited horizon, a huge wave, rearing its curling, snowy crest so high that it dwarfed all others I had ever seen. I could hardly believe my eyes. It was a thing of beauty as well as of awe as it came roaring down upon us.

Knowing that if I stayed on deck I would meet death by being washed overboard, I had just time to climb into the rigging, and was about half-way to the masthead when it burst upon the *Firecrest* in fury, burying her from my sight under tons of solid water and a lather of foam. The gallant little boat staggered and reeled under the blow, until I began to wonder anxiously whether she was going to founder or fight her way back to the surface.

Slowly she came out of the smother of it, and the great wave roared away to leeward. I slid down from my perch in

the rigging to discover that it had broken off the cutboard part of the bowsprit. Held by the jibstay it lay in a maze of rigging and sail under the lee rail, where every sea used it as a battering ram against the planking, threatening, at every blow, to stave a hole in the hull.

The mast was also swaying dangerously as the *Firecrest* rolled. Somehow the shrouds had become loose at the mast-head. There was now a fair prospect that the cutter would roll the mast out of her, even if the broken bowsprit failed to stave the hole it seemed trying for. The wind cut my face with stinging force, and the deck was, most of the time, awash with breaking seas.

But I was obliged to jump to work to save both boat and life. First I had to get the mainsail off her, and, in trying to do so, found the hurricane held the sail so hard against the lee topping lift that I had to rig a purchase to haul it down with the downhaul; but I finally managed to get it stowed.

It proved a tremendous job to haul the wreckage aboard. The deck was like a slide, and the gale so violent that I had to crouch down in order to keep from being wrenched off the deck and hurled bodily into the sea. I clung desperately to the shrouds at intervals. The broken part of the bowsprit was terrifically heavy, and I had to lash a rope around it while it was tossing about and buffeting the side. Several times it nearly jerked me overboard.

At last I had the jib in, and the bowsprit safely lashed on deck; but it was nearly dusk, and I felt worn out. That whipping mast had, however, to be reckoned with, and I could take no rest till at least an attempt had been made to get it tight. So, going aloft on the shaking stick, and clinging to it as it swung from side to side, I speedily discovered that the racking which held the port shrouds in a sort of eye had given away.

Twice I was swung clear of the ship, still clinging to a rope, to be dashed back against the mast with a bang. After nearly losing my hold more than once I found that I was too exhausted to make repairs that night, so slid down to deck to find the whole boat vibrating from the shaking spar.

I feared the deck might soon be opened under the strain of it, so, to steady it, I hoisted a close-reefed trysail, and filled her away on the starboard tack, in order to let the starboard and undamaged shrouds take the strain. I then hauled the clew of the reefed staysail to windward, and hove to.

With this nursing she rode a little easier, and the slatting



of the mast was not quite so severe. It was now nearly dark and the gale seemed to be moderating a little, so I went below to get supper.

But when I tried to start a fire, neither of the two Primus stoves would work : so I had to turn in, hungry, cold, drenched, and exhausted, for the first time on the cruise sad, fagged out and fed up.

At this point Bermuda lay only three hundred miles south, but New York at least one thousand miles away. I knew, too, that it would be good judgment to head for the islands, and make repairs there before going on to New York ; but I had set my heart on making the voyage from Gibraltar to the American coast without touching at any port, and to abandon that plan was heart-breaking.

So much did I feel upon this point that I think I should not have cared if a wave had swept over us and carried the *Firecrest* to the bottom of the sea. I tried vainly to sleep. The mast was still slatting about so hard that I feared it would either tear up the deck or carry it away. For some hours I stayed in my bunk thinking the problem out with aching head, and then suddenly decided to try the seemingly impossible.

I got up again, and, as I needed food badly, began to work at the stoves. I filed down three sail needles and broke them, one after another, before I could get one small enough to clear the hole through which the kerosene was fed to the vaporising burner. And it was nearly dawn before I got the burner working, but I was then able to cook a breakfast of tea and bacon.

This dispatched I began to feel ashamed of the indecisions of the night before. I felt ready for the battle again, and I determined to sail through thick and thin to New York, the goal of the trip.

On going on deck again I found that, though the gale had moderated a little, it was still blowing hard, and the sea tremendous.

The mast had to be steadied at all costs, and the damaged rigging repaired. It was hard to climb on the swinging stick, and it was harder to stay on it at all. With legs around the crosstrees I had to work head downward. In that position it took me more than an hour to put a racking seizing around the two shrouds where they came close together at the mast-head. Then, dropping down to the deck, I set the shrouds taut with the turnbuckles just above the rail. The mast was now as safe as I could make it.

But there was still the broken bowsprit to repair, and I found it was a job for the carpenter's saw and axe. With these tools I cut a slot in the broken end of the stick, slid it into position and fastened it there with the iron pin that originally held it in place. This gave me a jury bowsprit eight feet shorter than the original one.

As it proved, however, the hardest part of the job had still to be done, for I had to make a bobstay to hold down the end of the bowsprit. This I did by cutting a piece from the anchor-chain, and shackling it into a ringbolt fixed into the cutter's stem just below the water line. To do this I had to hang head downward from the bowsprit, near the stem, to reach that ringbolt under water. The consequence being that as her bow rose and fell she alternately dipped me two or three feet under water and brought me out dripping and sputtering, to repeat the dose again and again.

I don't quite know how I managed to complete the job, but it certainly had to be done, and, at the expense of many unwilling drinks of sea water, the shackle was got into place and bolted there.

As though in sullen irony, no sooner was this work finished than the gale suddenly moderated. It was just as though the elements were acknowledging that they were defeated, and were surrendering to the gallant little craft.

Taking advantage of this milder weather I made two observations, and located myself in latitude 36.10 north, and longitude 62.06 west. My position was thus about 800 miles from New York as the crow flies, but about 1000 to 1200 miles of actual sailing distance.

Although utterly exhausted I was sustained by a keen sense of satisfaction. So much so that I went to work repairing the pump, and soon found the cause of the trouble. A bit of a match had stuck in the valve, and this out I got it working again. After two hours of pumping the boat became clear of water, for I could hear the pump sucking dry; always a joy to a seaman's heart.

Going aloft to make sure the standing rigging was secure, I found the stays had chafed against the mast. It would therefore require careful handling to bring the mast into New York whole. Under the shortened bowsprit and reduced headsails the *Firecrest* was badly balanced, so that when I set the mainsail again I had to reef it by four turns of the boom in order to be able to steer at all; the consequence being that when sailing close-hauled she made much leeway.

I had, however, finished the repair work, so, lashing the tiller, I set my course for New York, and then fell exhausted on my bunk.

I had been, in succession, yacht hand, cook, rigger, carpenter, skipper, and navigator, and, although absolutely done, was rather pleased with myself in consequence.

# I CAME ALIVE OUT OF DEATH VALLEY

By

JAMES MILLIGAN

*The writer of this story is a man who, in his own words, "didn't stay honest." He saw his father lynched as a child, and he grew up hard, bitter and reckless. The adventure he recounts here befell him just after he had spent some time—very unwillingly—as cook on a cattle ranch. He had betrayed the movements of the herds of cattle to a cattle thief, then being found out, had narrowly escaped. So Milligan judged it better to put as much distance as possible between himself and that cattle ranch.*

WHILE I rode I had only one thought in my mind—that the district I was in lay within a few miles of two borders: the State border dividing New Mexico from Texas, and the International border dividing Old Mexico from the United States.

Four or five hours after nightfall I saw lights ahead, and presently I rode into a small town. At first I thought I'd left the United States and that I was in Mexico, but when I asked a passer-by where I was, he told me the town was Las Cruces, and then I knew it was New Mexico I had struck.

I rode right through the town and on for another hour. I still felt too darned near Texas for comfort. Before dawn I lay down on the open range, and slept for an hour or two.

When I got up I was sore with riding, but I mounted again and rode on. I rode the pony every day for a fortnight, and then I sold it and went on on foot. My destination was California.

\* \* \* \* \*

One day, not long after crossing the Californian border out of Nevada, I hit a tiny place called Mojave. A God-forsaken miserable village it was, but it had a saloon, and it was the first inhabited place I'd struck for a long time, because I'd been trailing through the Mojave Desert, so I was mighty glad to find it.

I went to the saloon for a start and drank three beers, one after another, to wash my throat clear of sand. I had just finished my third and was calling for my fourth, when a big tough-looking guy in a white sombrero came and slapped his palm on the bar just beside me and said :

"This one's on me, stranger."

I glanced at him in surprise.

"It suits me," I said. "Have it your own way."

He called for a drink for himself, and we drank together.

"I've been watchin' you," he said. "Sizin' you up, you might say."

"Well? Reached any verdict yet?"

He rolled and lit a cigarette.

"Yeah. . . . My verdict is that you ain't travellin' for pleasure—" He glanced down at my shabby clothes.

"—Nor yet for the good of your health."

"You're dead right. But where is all this health-talk bringing us?"

The man ignored the question.

"Ever swung a pick?"

"Too often," I answered quite truthfully, remembering Klondyke days.

"Ever worked with mules?"

"Sure," I said—not so truthfully this time.

The man in the white sombrero shot out the third of his rapid-fire questions :

"Like a job?"

"How much?" I could be terse too.

"Forty a week."

"That's good pay. What's the job—crowning old ladies with a pick?"

"Worse. Lookin' for gold in Death Valley. . . ."

I knew that name. I'd heard old prospectors in Alaska talking about Death Valley. They had all agreed there was gold there, but that it was so dangerous to enter the place that it wasn't worth all the gold in the world to risk one's neck in it.

The Valley, although quite small, was particularly easy to get lost in. It was subject to a certain kind of wind peculiarly its own which stirred up the sand and changed the whole aspect of the landscape after an hour or two, blotting out old landmarks and erecting new ones, burying new bones and uncovering old ones—bones of men who had lost their lives seeking gold in the place. And at the same time as it obliterated

ated the landmarks whereby men hoped to find their way in and out of the place, it obliterated the landmarks that led to places where gold had been struck, so that a man might strike an El Dorado on one trip into the Valley and never be able to find his way back to it.

Such was the place this stranger was inviting me to try as a rest-cure, and frankly I wasn't particularly attracted to the notion.

"Death Valley, eh? That's somewhere close to these parts, ain't it?"

"No more than a mile or two from where you're standin' right now," said the other man. "If you goes a little way up the road, you'll see the gap in the hills that leads into the Valley. This place is the nearest folks live to the Valley. And listen, buddy, the gold's there. I seen it myself. Why, I could walk to it with my eyes shut."

I'd heard talk not unlike that before.

"It's that's so, why give somebody else a rake-off out of the takings when you could keep the whole works for yourself? And, anyway, why pick on me to be the lucky guy?"

"I'll tell you about that. You gotta understand that the climate in Death Valley's so bad that the only safe thing to do is to go in for spells of a couple of weeks only, then come out again—besides, don't forget we gotta carry all the water we're gonna need for ourselves an' the mules. Well, don't you see it's gonna pay me better to pay another guy to come with me so I can bring out double the quantity of gold at the end of the two weeks?"

"I sure do—but I still don't see why you need to pick on me."

"Because you blew into this joint at the right time, an' because you look like a guy who could use some dough, that's why. I been waitin' round this burg for ever a week for an old partner who was comin' in with me. But he ain't arrived, and I ain't waitin' no longer for him. Well—coming with me?"

"I'll come," I said.

\* \* \* \* \*

The man with the white sombrero, whose name was Pete (I never knew him as anything else but that), had the mules and all the prospecting kit ready for the trip; and we started off next day.

When we came into the Valley, I didn't think it so bad it wasn't any hotter than the other parts of the Mojave Desert I'd struck already, and in fact looked very much the same as

the other parts—low dunes, heat, and sand-swirls, and that was all there was to it.

Pete acted like a man who knew his way about. When we entered the valley, we headed straight in a certain direction, and didn't swerve from it. We went ahead steadily for a whole day; then Pete yanked his blanket off the mule he was leading and flung it on the sand.

"Here's the place. We camp here," he said.

How he knew the spot, I couldn't figure out at all. All around us there was nothing to be seen but sand, and there were no landmarks of any sort. However, I reckoned that he knew what he was doing. I was being paid a flat rate, and it didn't matter to me whether he struck gold or not.

Next day we started digging, and I began to wonder why we'd brought picks along with us at all, for it was nothing but shovel-work on the soft sand. For three days we dug, and were getting pretty deep, and then a wind sprang up. Within a few seconds of it starting, we were right in the middle of a hundred per cent. sandstorm, and, after an hour or so of it, the big hole it had taken us so much labour to dig was completely filled in again.

During the storm, we had just lain doggo inside our tent, with the mules well tethered—there was nothing else we *could* do, and I felt like howling when we came out to find nothing but unbroken sand where our hole had been. Pete didn't worry, though.

"It don't signify," he said cheerfully. "That's just Death Valley all over. Never mind. We'll just have to start in diggin' all over again, that's all."

And we did. For a week we dug, until we'd a hole twice the size of the first one. There was no sign of gold yet, but Pete was sure we'd come on it soon enough. As a matter of fact, I was beginning to get a bit worried about the way Pete kept so darned cheerful, whatever happened; also about the queer way he was going about his prospecting. . . .

By that time, too, I was beginning to have worries of a different kind. For one thing, there was the heat. Sometimes it rose as high as 130 degrees, and was hardly ever below 100. Then my body broke out in large patches with warts—or nut-boils—large brown gatherings which itched horribly and kept bursting with a brown discharge that appeared to set up other boils wherever it touched the skin. Pete told me these abominations were the result of drinking the stale water we had been obliged to bring from beyond the Valley.

These weren't the worst pests either. My ill-used carcass became a hunting-ground for the "greenback-lice" that flourish locally. These are repulsive creatures much bigger than the common louse, and twice as voracious. They seem to possess the same sort of ability for changing their colour as the chameleon does. Against a black surface they became black, and on the skin they adopted a light green colour—hence the name. When we came out, I had thought that a fortnight wasn't too long to stay at a spell in Death Valley—now I began to wonder. . . .

On the eleventh day, the second sandstorm came. And when it did, it just about finished me.

One of the mules had strayed, and I chased him. I was just about fifty yards from the mule and a couple of hundred from the camp, when the wind started in to work.

The mule was off like a shot, galloping away into the veil of the flying sand. I let the brute go, and started back to the camp. The sand was blowing up thicker and thicker, and I was scared.

I hadn't gone ten yards before I was more scared still—I couldn't see the camp. . . . Nothing but a thick blanket of drifting sand, with myself in the middle of it, shut off and caught as securely as a fly in amber.

I tried to cheer myself up by saying I knew quite well in which direction the camp lay, and that I couldn't miss it. . . . Roughly two hundred yards—I'd take just two hundred paces, and that ought to land me there—it wouldn't do to go past; that would be fatal. . . .

I started walking, counting my paces carefully. One-ninety-eight, one-ninety-nine, two hundred. . . . And still there was nothing about me but the sand. . . .

Maybe it was more than a couple of hundred yards: I'd go on another ten paces. I did—nothing!

Another ten paces—and I was getting real frightened by now. . . . Still nothing but sand—sand under my feet—sand filling the air—sand in my eyes and mouth. . . .

I lost my head. I ran round in circles, my head bent, half-blinded, calling out to Pete like a lunatic. . . .

The sandstorm didn't stop for maybe two hours—but how long it was I've no exact idea. By the time it was over, I was deaf and blind and stunned. I remember looking about me in wonderment to find the air clear of sand. I could see. I could see the hot blue sky and the placid dunes all round me. But that was all. Of the camp there was no sign. . . .



I was lost, and I knew it. A new fear gripped me : already I was feeling my tongue dry and hard with thirst. . . .

I began to walk. I walked till sundown, and all through the night. In the morning there was still nothing to be seen about me but the endless hillocks of sand. I went on walking, in an agony of thirst by now, and, when noon came, I could walk no farther. Twice I dropped in my tracks, and the second time I couldn't get up again.

The next thing I remember is a tiny drop of water—sweeter and fresher than any nectar—on my parched tongue. Then another drop. It was like coming unexpectedly into the Kingdom of Heaven.

I opened my eyes and saw a brown-bearded face looking down at me. I shouted and laughed at the man, calling him Pete—but it wasn't Pete.

"Take it easy, pal," said the stranger. "You'll be outa this sand-pit in a coupla shakes."

I closed my eyes again. Maybe I fainted again, maybe I slept. At any rate when I woke again I was lying in a bed. What a bed ! It was so soft and clean that I just had to go off to sleep again.

\* \* \* \* \*

I was in the saloon back in the village of Mojave. Some old prospector beating it out of Death Valley had found me and brought me along. I was darned lucky, they told me, to get out alive—and so was the old guy who'd brought me out.

Who the old fellow was I never found out ; for I never saw him. He just dumped me in the keeping of the saloon-boss, then beat it out of town, saying he didn't want to waste time in getting as far away from Death Valley as he could. I was sorry. I'm not a fellow who's too grateful for services rendered, but I'd like to have thanked that guy. . . .

They were good to me in that saloon, especially when I told them I was willing to work in the bar for my board. And they knew how to attend to me, for I wasn't the only one by a long chalk that had been carried out of Death Valley into that joint ; and I was out of bed in a couple of days.

The first thing I thought about was Pete. I told the saloon-keeper that I'd left my partner in the Valley, and suggested sending a search-party for him.

"Pete ?" said the saloon-boss. "Was he a big guy with a white sombrero and a cataract in one eye ?"

"That's him."

The boss whistled.



*I lost my head and ran round in circles, half-blinded.*



" Say, buddy, I wonder if you knew the company you was travelling in ? That guy Pete is nutty as a fruit-cake. He went into the Valley once years ago an' came out ravin' mad. He's been mad ever since, an' keeps goin' back, swearin' he knows where there's a heap of gold. Maybe his madness helps him, for he's the only guy I know who ever comes out again regular."

" God ! " I exclaimed. " A looney ! You don't mean he's dangerous ? "

" Not as a rule. But he gets plumb murderous if anybody says he don't know where his pocket of gold is. If you'd said anything like that, he mighta killed you ! "

" So *that's* what was wrong with Pete. I thought he was queer. . . . D'you think he'll come out again this time ? "

" I guess so."

He did. The very next day, Pete wandered into the bar as casually as though he just stepped in from across the road. I was serving behind the bar, but he didn't give me a second glance.

" Weather's gettin' mighty warm," he remarked as I set up his drink.

I said nothing about the wages he owed me. Somehow, I thought it better not to.

# ESCAPE FROM THE FOREIGN LEGION

By

MICHAEL DONOVAN

*After serving for eight months in the French Foreign Legion, the author decided to escape with a friend from the fort at Ainalager, where they were stationed. This is the story of Donovan's adventures following his escape, the death of his friend who was shot by an Arab, and the terrible privations he suffered before reaching a port where he succeeded in boarding a Fifeshire trader bound for Scotland.*

AND so it went on, day after day, week after week; shortage of food, shortage of water, excess of heat, excess of thirst, excess of fatigue; occasional shots fired at us, occasional glimpses of Arab snipers; occasional new notches added by myself to the hand-grips of different machine-guns with a figure scratched over them, sometimes five, sometimes twelve, sometimes twenty; and rare, oh! so rare returns to the fort for a period of "rest"; then a novelty—an unwelcome novelty—busy as bees behind the line on road-making, road-repairing, fort-building, railway-laying, always with a corporal standing over us, a corporal with a revolver at his belt; then back again to stockade headquarters for other spells of outpost duty. During one of these we were stranded on a hilltop for ten days with only four days' rations. It can be better imagined than described. So the weeks passed, lengthened into months, and the months too slipped from the Future into the Past.

But a climax was approaching.

With every new day that came, I felt as if it would be on us by nightfall. I knew not what that climax was, but I could almost see it in shapeless outline hovering over our heads. Was it death? . . . I did not know, and I did not care overmuch. Life and death were all the same to me. . . . But it was not death.

It came at last, that climax. Unmistakable.

The negro had taken a beautiful gold ring, set with a fine red stone, from the finger of an Arab whom we had killed during an attack on our stockade. I had been struck by its beauty and the negro, noticing my admiration, had given me the ring to keep.

Two or three days later, when our relief arrived, we were transferred to the fort for a few days' rest. As luck would have it, some one saw me showing the ring to Miller, and informed the sergeant. All valuables taken from dead Arabs are Legion property, I ought to explain, and presumably the sergeant thought this too good an opportunity to be wasted.

He summoned Smithy, the negro, the German and I to appear before him with full kits, made a thorough examination of the kits, and then told us to strip to the skin.

This was the order I most feared, for I carried the ring by means of a string round my neck, and I realised that he would see it immediately I took off my shirt. We knew better than to disobey him, however, and soon all four of us were standing before him—without a stitch of clothing on our bodies.

As I feared, the sergeant "spotted" the ring at once, and came up to me and closely examined it. Then he suddenly twisted his hand in the cord and pulled it tight around my throat, apparently meaning to strangle me. I put my hand up to my neck to prevent the string cutting into the flesh, but his hand was quicker than mine, and I lost all consciousness of what followed by reason of that blow to the face which he gave me.

When I came to, Miller and Smithy were trying to get me dressed again. I found I was bruised from head to foot. My ribs ached when I touched them, and from what Miller and Smithy told me, and from the evidence of my own body, it seems that the sergeant had tried to kick me to death. The bruises were with me for a fortnight.

That incident decided me. Death was far preferable to an existence of this kind. It was increasingly apparent that the sergeant hated me, and would sooner or later find an excuse to shoot me.

But in any case, even without the sergeant's brutality, existence in the French Foreign Legion was nothing better than a slow living death, with no hope of any betterment until some Arab bullet or Arab knife put an end to my career. . . . Algeria—Morocco—they were positive hell-spots. . . . The

whole Legion some devilish invention transcending all the genius of the Spanish Inquisition. . . . This was *hell*, and I must get away before my mind perished.

I told Miller later that day that I was ready to make an attempt to escape. "The sooner the better," I added.

"Aye, aye, Mick," said Miller, quite unconcernedly, "the morn's night."

"What about the guards?" I asked.

"I'll look after the guards," he said abruptly, and he kept his word too. He *did* "look after the guards," to some purpose.

When Miller left me, I felt that I must ask Smithy to join us in the attempt, but all I got from him was a pitying look. Since coming to Morocco, Smithy had sunk deeper and deeper into the slough of despair and had recently suffered other fits of violent insanity. Three times he had run off into the darkness, screaming like a frightened child, when we were at the headquarters-outpost, and three times had Miller and I brought him back to safety after quietening him by a blow over the head with the butt-end of a rifle. To all intents and purposes, Smithy was a madman.

I would be the same too, I thought, if I had another month of this hell, and my determination to escape at once became the stronger by reason of that pitying look on Smith's piteous face. It was now or never, three words which kept me awake for hours that night while my tired, bruised body was crying out for sleep.

Miller came to me early the next morning and told me to get hold of as much food and ammunition as possible. He would do the same, he said. He suggested that sunset would be the best time to go off—whenever darkness fell—and I agreed with the proposal, my heart beating the faster at the mere thought of it.

Straightaway I set about the task he had given me, and in all managed to gather thirty rounds of ammunition, two tins of fish, one tin of bully beef, and one ring of bread. The cartridges I secreted about my body, the food and my water-bottle I put into a haversack, and then began the most difficult task of all—awaiting the coming of darkness.

Never had there been a longer day than that. Sunset seemed to be hours and hours later than normally. But at last it came, and Miller and I lowered ourselves over the wall of the fort in the short spell of darkness which preceded the rising of the moon.

We lay in the sand for a minute, scarce daring to breathe, but the gloomy silence that enfolded the fort reassured us that we had not been seen, and then we nudged one another and pointed to the guard stationed twenty yards or so from where we lay.

I will draw a veil over the happenings of the next ten minutes or so. But I will satisfy your curiosity to some extent by saying that Miller lost his knife and that the butt-end of my rifle became wet and sticky to the touch; also that the German sergeant who had hated me did not hate me any longer. . . . He ceased to hate *any one* in that fateful ten minutes, for a well-thrust knife penetrated his black, foul heart and he died. *He died!* . . . Also, a night guard who violated the best traditions of the Legion by asking a question before pressing trigger paid dearly for his breach of duty. He, too, died. But his was a more honourable death than that which we gave the sergeant.

We were free. *We were free.* WE WERE FREE! . . . And we lost no time in putting as much distance as possible between ourselves and the fort. We covered fully twenty miles that night, I warrant. Indeed, I think twenty-five miles would be a more accurate estimate.

Fear as well as hope gave speed to our feet, and dawn came much sooner than we wished. We had nothing to guide us on our way, of course, except the twin-mountains away to the east, and although these were not visible to us at all—it required daylight and the extra height of the fort-tower to bring them into view—we knew we were heading in their direction, and the north star looked down on us and gave its ready assistance.

We halted at dawn and began to look around for a hiding-place. Daylight travelling would have been madness, we knew, bringing with it the certainty of discovery, and eventually we found a small cleft between two huge pieces of rock, into which we squeezed ourselves with right goodwill. Here we had our first meal, washing it down with a small drink. Water would be as scarce as diamonds before long, we knew, and from the very first we agreed on “iron rations” for the whole of the journey.

Immediately the little meal was over, we tossed a coin to ascertain which one of us would sleep while the other kept watch. Miller won, and at once lay down as best he could in our cramped quarters, while I sat at the entrance to the aperture with the rifle over my knees. We had only one rifle



with us, I would like to mention, and throughout the night had taken turn about of carrying it, a practice we continued on subsequent stages of the journey. We had at first thought of carrying a rifle each, but had given up that plan on account of consideration of weight. Two rifles would be more of a hindrance than a help we had eventually agreed.

My position at the entrance to the cleft in the rocks allowed a view in only one direction, but months of outpost duty had taught me to "see" with my ears as well as with my eyes, and I had no fear that any one could come within appreciable distance of our hiding-place without my hearing them.

I had been sitting for roughly half an hour when the whole of my body developed an extraordinary itchiness. No sooner did I scratch my arms than my legs began to itch. Then the itch spread to my feet, my hands, my breast, my head. I looked around, irritated and puzzled, and to my intense disgust saw that the cleft in the rocks was simply swarming with little red ants—thousands and thousands of them. They were on my boots, my legs, my arms, my head—they were everywhere—and I could feel lumps rising all over my body.

I turned to Miller to find out what he was thinking about this surprise assault, and could not resist a smile when I saw him simply smothered in ants; but he was sound asleep, and knew nothing whatever about the new enemies we had made. The half-humorous, half-serious thought went through my mind that he might be eaten to death if he were allowed to sleep throughout this mass attack, and I gave him a prod with my foot which awoke him very quickly. He gazed around for a second or two, no doubt wondering where he was, then when he spotted two hundred or three hundred ants patrolling his arm, the look which came to his face was comical in the extreme. Most of them had had a bite at him, I reckon, for he began to throw his clothes off as quickly as if his life depended on the speed with which he became naked. I soon followed his wise move, and for the next thirty minutes we were exceedingly busy in clearing ourselves of that section of the ants' army which had found its way into our clothes.

The cleft in the rocks was the home of these ferocious little insects, it seems, and naturally enough they resented our straying into their domain. But it was broad daylight by this time, and it would have been the height of folly for us to go off now in search of another hiding-place, so we

remained all day in that cleft, no whit less industrious than the proverbially-industrious inhabitants of it. They gave us no rest and we gave them no rest, hence our first day of freedom passed without my having a wink of sleep. Miller had only the half-hour's sleep which I previously mentioned.

Fortunately, we were not disturbed by any human being, whether Arab or legionnaire. We seemed to be well off the beaten track, and the fact that we had crossed only a few camel-paths on the previous night and had encountered no real roads worth the name, encouraged us to think that we were well clear of Legion forts.

Darkness drew in at last, we gladly left the ants to enjoy sole occupancy of the rock-cleft, and the second night's march began. The journey was uneventful, as was our journey of the next night, and the next, and the next, and I feel that I can pass over five nights and days as unworthy of special mention. We went over hill and plain in a straight line, following faithfully the instructions of the north star, going as quickly as we reasonably could and sticking to shelter during the hours of daylight.

On the fourth night, I must add, we were lucky enough to stumble on an oasis. Here we had a welcome meal of prickly pears and wild figs, washed down by copious draughts of beautiful cold water. We filled our canteens with the precious water, stuffed as many pears and figs into our pockets and haversacks as we could carry, and off we went once again, wonderfully refreshed and wonderfully cheerful.

On the fifth night—by this time we had left the twin-mountains far behind and had crossed the Legion railway line—we decided that we had come as far east as was necessary and then, still with the north star as our sole guide, we turned due north . . . north to the coast, north to the Mediterranean, north to *home*.

We maintained a surprisingly good pace despite the fact that we were avoiding all roads; and on the sixth night had begun to congratulate ourselves on accomplishing almost half of our journey free of hitch, when a cruel blow fell on us. . . . Miller suddenly became blind.

His eyes remained open, but he could not distinguish anything that was more than a few inches from his face. He was as helpless as a child. It was sun-blindness, I suppose. Whatever the cause, it was a savage stroke.

Words cannot describe how my heart went out to him in his affliction, nor can they indicate a tenth part of the courage

with which Miller endured his shattering misfortune. In the darkness, he was as blind as if he had no eyes at all, yet he urged me not to alter our plans in any way.

"Go on, go on, maybe I'll be all right in the mornin', Mick," he said, when I told him I would look about for a place in which we could spend the night. "Go on, go on," he repeated, with a laugh, "a Scotsman tak's a lot o' killing, ye ken."

I knew the effort it had cost him to joke of the darkness that had fallen over his eyes, and I swallowed a great lump in my throat and resumed the march, with Miller's hand in mine.

On we went. Never will I forget that night as long as I live. We stumbled over rocks and stones, we fell often to our knees, every bone in our bodies was sore and asking plaintively for rest, yet Miller still urged: "Keep going, Mick; I'm sure I'll be all right in the mornin'. Keep going, Mick. I'm sure I'll be all right."

Melancholy thoughts filled my mind. What would be the end of this adventure? Our food was finished, our pears and figs were finished, our canteens were nearly empty . . . what would be the end of it all? . . . Was this to be the last adventure of my life? Were we just marching on to death?

So sorrowful were my thoughts that I believe I would have welcomed death just then. Painless death—what a relief it would have been! . . . Miller's affliction was my affliction. I could not see any reasonable ray of hope. We were doomed. The desert had us, and the desert would keep us. Failure filled my whole mind, but on we went, mechanically—stumbling over rocks and stones, our shuffling feet catching in the sand at times and giving us softer falls. On we went, hand in hand, like two children. And Miller still muttered. "Go on, Mick, go on. I'm sure to be all right in the mornin'."

Dawn was slowly creeping over the horizon when I led Miller among some foothills which we had been skirting for a couple of hours. There would be a hiding-place in these hills, I knew, and there was none in the great waves of sand which billowed and tossed away into the distance on our left.

When I had chosen a spot where we could spend the day unseen by prying eyes, I set Miller on the ground where he could lie outstretched, and then I asked him if he could see any better.

He slowly shook his head and tears began to trickle down his cheeks. I could stand anything except that, and in a moment we were both sobbing like children. I gripped his shoulder and nothing has thrilled me with such sweet tenderness as the touch of his rough cheek as he pressed it against mine. I broke down completely then, and wept in a way that I did not think possible for a fully-grown man.

It was weakness, undoubtedly, but I felt the better for it afterwards, and when Miller told me to go on without him, a feeling of exhilaration shot through me and I gave him a slap on the back and asked him if he knew any more funny stories. Once again he told me to go on without him, whereupon I said I had a good mind to go off and leave him for having insulted me, at which we both laughed, and then clasped hands, in the manner of sweethearts.

I made a bandage for his eyes from the sleeve of my shirt, which appeared to ease him considerably, and he fell asleep a few minutes after the bandage had been fixed.

A strange sensation of loneliness gripped me as I sat by his side. It seemed as if I were the only person in the whole world. Everything was so quiet, so still, that a shiver ran through me. I felt *cold*. Was death like this? I wondered. What was death? How long would it be before both Miller and I were dead? . . . Would any miracle come to save us? It could be only a miracle that would do it.

A murmur from Miller interrupted my thoughts. "Mother," he murmured in his sleep, followed by a stream of words in broad Scotch too rapid for me to understand. Then silence, then more words in broad Scotch. Then silence again. Throughout the remainder of the day Miller slept peacefully.

The bandage and the day's sleep seemed to have done him a world of good, and when I uncovered his eyes that evening he said he could see much better. He was thoroughly rested and had recovered much of his former cheerfulness. "Come on, Mick. Awa' wi' ye," he said briskly and, snatching up the rifle, led the way out of the gorge. My heart leapt in thankfulness at so good a recovery, and I smiled as I ran for a few yards to make up on his eager feet. New hope coursed through me, and new visions of home came to banish the dark thoughts that had been with me throughout the day. . . . But little did I know of what awaited us. Little did I expect the hellish blow that Fate had prepared.

During the previous two nights, we had crossed all sorts

of paths, leading in various directions, and I had mingled hope and fear that we would soon find ourselves in a civilised part of the country—hope that we would be at the coast in a short time and fear that we might be near a Legion depot.

No sooner had we got clear of the foothills than we came to a broad path. This we decided to follow, for it lay in the line of our route, and we soon had reason to congratulate ourselves on our choice. Before we had gone a couple of miles, we came on an Arab grape-farm at the roadside, where we loaded ourselves with as many bunches of grapes as we could carry, setting a-barking what seemed like a hundred dogs, all at the same instant. But no Arab farmer will venture over his doorstep after darkness has fallen, and we went off unmolested.

Other small farms at the roadside supplied us with other bunches of grapes—the first stock did not last us half an hour—and so the miles went past quite joyously.

Dawn found us on an open plain, unproductive of a hiding-place, so we turned off the path and made for a cactus-covered hill a mile off, where we intended to conceal ourselves during the hours of daylight.

Almost at the same instant as we left the roadway a mounted Arab came into view from behind a little dip—the first human being we had encountered since leaving the fort. I heard him before I saw him, the first intimation of his presence being the sound of his closing the breech-bolt of his rifle, proof that he saw us before we saw him. Then the Arab shouted to us.

Miller was carrying the rifle at the time—he had insisted on our retaining the turn-and-turn-about arrangement even on the night he was almost totally blind—and I yelled out : “Drop him, Jock !”

I fell flat on my stomach when the Arab raised his rifle and a bullet went whizzing an inch or two over me.

Miller let loose then, and as I had dropped facing the Arab I saw Miller’s shot go yards wide of its intended mark.

I had quite forgotten about Miller’s blindness—he had by no means recovered full use of his eyes—and my heart jumped into my throat and well-nigh choked me when I saw the bullet strike the path well behind horse and man.

The Arab fired a second shot, but not at me this time, and I heard Miller give a choked cry and saw him roll over and over like a log, coming to rest within a yard of me and lying still as death.

Although there had been a hundred machine guns raining their fire on me in that moment, they would not have prevented me from jumping to my feet as I did, snatching up the rifle and running towards that Arab with the determination to kill him. I had only a vague notion of firing the rifle at him—I was indeed more seized with the idea of battering his brains out—but one of my legs gave under me as I ran and the hand of Fate put the rifle-butt to my shoulder.

Over the sights I saw the Arab taking aim at me, but I was first.

He fell from the horse when I pressed the trigger and I ran forward and emptied the magazine into his body, a stream of tears from my heart itself running down the rifle-barrel. Then I smashed his skull into fragments with I know not how many blows of the rifle-butt and smashed his face until it was a face no longer! God! Had that Arab's body been made of steel I would have smashed it to bits just the same in these moments that my heart broke.

"Jock! Jock! Are you dead?" I screamed as I ran back to where Miller was lying. . . . He was alive, but I saw in the first glance that he would not live for long. . . . A bullet, that Arab's bullet, had passed through his throat.

"I'm finished, Mick," he gasped, so faintly that I could scarcely hear him. "Have ye a drink?"

My hand shook, my whole body shook, as I held the canteen to his mouth. Forgive me, reader, but I would gladly have bartered my body and soul to the Devil himself in that instant if by so doing I could have put back unfired that bullet which had struck Miller. The *anguish* of it!

I hurriedly bound up the lacerated neck—that hellish bullet had made two wounds: one where it entered the neck and one where it left it—and I swallowed hard to see little sign of blood, woeful evidence of severe internal bleeding.

Miller himself seemed to know that he was dying. In his eyes as he looked up at me were long conversations too sacred for despoilment by words. I read the messages with no difficulty—they were addressed to me and admitted of no misunderstanding—and a sad sweetness descended on me that I was being honoured with a dying man's benediction.

I made him as comfortable as I could, held him tightly in my arms, and then the neigh of a horse brought me abruptly back to material things. The Arab's horse was standing thirty yards away looking towards us—I became aware for

the first time that full daylight had come—and my thoughts flashed to the pathway just out of sight where the body of Miller's murderer lay. . . . That Arab's corpse—the Arab's *carcass*—must be moved out of sight at once. The path might be frequently used, some one might come along it at any moment ; that murderer's foul body must be removed at once.

I dragged Miller to the shade of a low bush not far from the path, made a pillow for him out of the two haversacks, and hurried to the accursed spot where Miller's murderer lay. I seized his ankle as though it had been the fallen bough of a tree, dragged him quickly towards a few scattered bushes thirty yards off, and rejoiced savagely to hear that murderer's head come into sharp contact with half a dozen stones among the sand.

Even as I began to scrape a hole in the sand in which to hide the loathsome body, the thought struck me that I should change clothes with him. In the dress of an Arab, I could walk unchallenged over all Algeria, whereas in my Legion uniform every step I took was one of danger.

Revolting as was the thought of wearing the clothes of the man who had fired that shot at Miller, I had become used to making up my mind quickly after all these months in a Regiment of Quick Decisions, so I rapidly stripped the dead man of his clothes and rolled the naked body into the grave with a push of my foot.

I threw off my Legion tunic and trousers with fast-beating heart, but I had to conquer an overwhelming feeling of nausea before I could put on a single item of the Arab outfit. Even after it was on, my skin shrank from the touch of these accursed clothes, then my eyes chanced to fall on a bullet-hole high up, just at the region of the heart, and my revulsion vanished, its place taken by a pathetic pride—pride that I had avenged my friend.

I had considerable difficulty in adjusting the turban—the blood on it was still wet—but at last I got it right and gladly threw my Legion clothes on top of the body and heaped the sand over them. When I stepped into the sunlight from behind these bushes, I was an Arab. The dead man had been about the same size as I, and the clothes fitted well enough, I dare say, although I felt anything but comfortable in them.

The Arab's rifle catching my eye as I went back to Miller, I at once buried the hateful thing in a little grave of its own.

"Scottie" was unconscious when I got back to him. By his incoherent mutterings I could tell that fever was setting in to make things worse for him. In his rambling talk he cried for water, water, and I gave him every drop that was in my canteen. . . . Then I tried to get him to eat part of a large flat oaten cake which I had found among the Arab's belongings, but he turned his head away. . . . Water was the only thing he wanted.

We were too near the path to be safe from discovery, I realised, and after a careful look around to satisfy myself that no one was in sight, I hoisted Miller on to my shoulders and stumbled across the thirty yards of sand which separated us from the clump of bushes wherein I had buried the Arab. There I laid him under the thickest bush I could find and returned to the path for my rifle and Miller's canteen. There was still a little water in it.

I sat at Miller's side that livelong day with my hand on his brow. He spoke to me once or twice at short periods of returning consciousness, but what he said will never be known by any one except myself. . . . A dying man's confidences, a dying man's last words—who would seek to betray so hallowed a trust? . . . No one other than myself will ever know his real name, or know what it was that made so fine a man join the Legion of the Lost.

When evening arrived, I gave him the last drop that was in the canteen and—God alone gave me the strength—hoisted him on to my shoulders and set off in search of water, the rifle held across the small of my back to ease the weight.

Each step was unutterable agony. My knees seemed in imminent danger of breaking under the strain. My eyes were filled with scalding tears. A hundred confused sounds rang in my ears. I gasped rather than breathed. . . . Yet something within me bade me go on. It was God, I think, rather than Michael Donovan, who carried Miller in search of water throughout these terrible hours.

Down I dropped on to my knees, the double weight pushing them three inches into the sand, and up again I rose, with my chest heaving as if it were about to burst. . . . "Stop!" screamed my hands, when the blood started to fall from them, forced out by the grip I had taken of the rifle, a grip I could not let go. "Stop!" screamed my legs and arms simultaneously as they cracked with the strain. "Stop!" screamed my brain, "this is madness!" . . . Yet something quiet, insistent, impelling, deep down within me whispered



urgently, eagerly: "Go on. Go on," and I heard that whisper more clearly than all these cries of pain.

But I could not go on indefinitely, and when, for the hundredth time, my feet caught in the sand and my knees buried themselves out of sight, I found it was beyond my strength to rise again.

Miller had regained consciousness by now and whispered hoarsely to me to stop. He seemed to be in terrible pain, and I lowered him as gently as I could on to the sand and held him tight to me. . . . Miller, how I *loved* him! Oh! the fierce joy with which I held him in my arms in these heavenly moments. And the hellishness of the thought that he was slipping away from me. He was dying—*dying*.

I had no means whereby I could help him, not a single drop of water, and after a few minutes' rest I tried to lift him to my shoulders once more. But the effort was beyond my strength, and I had much ado to refrain from dropping him heavily back to the spot from which I had partially raised him.

I lay panting for another minute and then resolved to leave him for a little, in the hope of finding water nearby. I tottered away without daring to look back at the sand-hill on which he lay. One backward glance at that moonlit hill would kill all my resolution, I knew, and I stumbled on with great sobs shaking my whole body.

Fortune was with me, for I came on a grape-farm before I had gone half a mile. I tore down a dozen bunches of grapes and ran back to Miller, quenching my own terrible thirst on the way. I was too late. Miller was worse, much worse, and made no attempt to swallow the grape-juice which I trickled into his mouth. . . . He died, *he died*, an hour later, in my arms.

Tears blinded me. Sobs choked me. I wept, and wept, until I could weep no longer, and I fell asleep with Miller's hand in mine.

The sun was setting when I awoke.

I turned eagerly to Miller—it was time for us to resume the march—and saw only his face, the face of a dead man.

Miller, *dead*? . . . Then went shrieking through my mind the hellish memory of these past hours. . . . Miller, *dead*! He would speak no more. He would sing no more. He was *dead*. . . . Miller, the man who risked his life to throw a cigarette into the fort prison to me. Miller, the

man who warned me about that death-trap of an outpost Miller, the man who had made me forget all my troubles Miller, the man who had done me a thousand kindnesses in the few months I had known him. Miller, the man who had "looked after the guards" when we escaped from the fort. Miller, the man who had joked about his blindness. Miller, the man with the heart of gold. Miller, the man whom I loved as a brother. . . . *Dead!*

I buried him there, where he lay, as quickly as I could. I would go mad, I knew, if I stayed any longer at that hallowed spot. Even now, with the shadows falling quickly around me, the thoughts of what had happened were knocking impatiently at the door to my mind, demanding admittance. They would rob me of my sanity if I let them in, I told myself, as I heaped the last handful of sand on to the mound which was the body of my friend. I must flee. I must flee.

So I stole away, with a terrible lump in my throat—alone *Alone.*

At the nearby farm I ate as many grapes as my stomach allowed, and would have been thankful indeed had the farm-owner sighted me from his hovel and ended everything there and then with a well-aimed shot. But Fortune was never more careful of my life than in these bitter days when I desired death.

I walked in a trance throughout that night, found myself once more on the broad camel-path, and went on heedless of where it might take me. I have only a faint knowledge of my own actions during these hours of darkness and only a vague recollection of what I saw and heard, but I remember passing through two small villages. When I came near the first of these, I hid my rifle under the night-shirt affair I wore and kept it concealed there for the remainder of the night.

The coming of daylight was as nothing to me and I continued, in a daze, my endless walk without an instant's halt. A number of Arabs passed me in a body, they shouted something to me and seemed disposed to stop and chat, but I walked on without a second look at them. I had no fear of them, I had no feelings at all, but I remember estimating that I would have the satisfaction of killing two of them before they could kill me, if it came to a fight.

Other Arabs hailed me as the day went on, and what they thought when I did not reply is something known only to themselves. But it would not have been beneficial to their health to have attempted to stop me, for I was desperate now

—reckless—and would have produced my rifle and opened fire with very little provocation. . . . I could drop on one knee and get my rifle into firing position long before they got their rifles off their backs, I said to myself listlessly.

The road I was on developed in the course of time into a wide automobile thoroughfare, and on the following afternoon I found myself in the town of Mascara, in the streets of which I experienced a new thrill of terror which roughly shook me out of my mental lethargy.

I shuffled round a corner, endeavouring to pluck up sufficient courage to enter a shop and spend the money which I had got in the Arab's clothes, when I found I was within fifteen yards of a squad of legionnaires who were marching towards me.

Craven fear rooted my feet to the roadway. I could do nothing except stand and stare at them as they came swiftly on me. An icy chill ran through my whole body. I was petrified.

But the corporal in front, he was marching a few feet in advance of the others, rapidly brought me back to life with a kick which peeled the skin from my leg. I leapt out of the way then, my heart fluttering high in my breast with the hope that he had not discovered me to be other than an Arab, and I hobbled to the side of the road in glad consciousness of the pain in my shin. I dare not look round at them. I stood staring at the walls of a near-by house, and then the temptation got the better of me. I did look round, feeling instinctively that the corporal was at my back ready to lay his heavy hand on my shoulder; but he was out of sight round the corner and most of his men too. I almost screamed in relief when I saw the last of them turning the corner.

I was happy—yes, happy—in the moments which followed that narrow escape, and I almost believe that I smiled to the French owner of a fruit-shop into which I went a few moments later to spend the Arab's money. I spoke not a word to him but pointed to this and then pointed to that, until I had as much fruit in my possession as the Arab's francs would permit me to buy.

Ten minutes later I was out of Mascara and heading for Oran, ninety odd miles away.

I had not gone more than a mile and a half when a motor-horn sounded behind me. I beckoned the driver with a wave of my hand as he drew level with me, and he at once slowed down and said something in French which I took

to be an invitation to jump aboard. The car was one of these light haulage wagons, and I had no sooner pulled myself on to the back of it than it shot away at a good speed. I sat with my eyes closed, almost unable to believe my good fortune, but there was no doubt about it. The miles sped by, one after the other, and the sensation of rest and relief was such that it seemed as if I were on a magic carpet, being borne to Heaven. Every mile now was a mile farther from danger.

The car had covered a good sixty miles when the driver drew up at an intersecting road and with a jerk of the thumb bade me get off. I lowered myself slowly on to the road, my hidden rifle as well as my stiff bones making the job an awkward one, and without a word the driver turned into the side road and sped off along it as quickly as we had done on the main road.

Late the following afternoon I was in sight of Oran.

I cannot describe the feelings which flooded through me when I came over the crest of a long hill and saw the Mediterranean lying before me. I was in the grip of a terrible excitement and do not know how long I stood there in a trance, gazing down on the sea, the city, and its ships.

I pulled myself together at last, felt myself shivering, and resumed my journey—the last lap. Then I stopped, after I had taken half a dozen steps. Caution held up its warning finger.

My rifle, I must dispose of it. Oran—the port at which we had arrived on the voyage from Marseilles—was a Legion clearing-house depot, and a French army rifle would quickly attract attention. I could not carry it about under my “night-shirt” for ever. . . . So I buried the rifle and cartridges in a sand-bank close to the roadside and a new wave of loneliness came over me. The rifle had been my only friend since I lost Miller. And now it was gone, too. I missed the intimate whack on the knee which it had been giving me with almost every step I took.

Oran was no mirage. Its turrets and its ships became the clearer and the bigger with every new mile, and my heart began to sing in a way it had not done for many weary months—months that seemed like years. Twilight was falling as I reached the outskirts of the city, and the little Goddess of Luck, who seemed now to have become my ally, pointed out to me a pair of striped trousers which were lying over a bush in a back garden. They had apparently just been washed and were laid out to dry.

I climbed over the garden wall with heart thumping sorely against my ribs—stealing a pair of trousers seemed to me a mighty crime compared with killing a dozen Arabs with a machine gun—and I adopted these pants without any ceremony. I rid myself of the Arab clothes with right goodwill and when I re climbed the wall and continued my way into Oran I was dressed only in these trousers and my Legion shirt, socks, and boots. The shirt I turned outside in, I might add, so that the Legion crest on the breast was hidden. From a hill Arab I had changed myself into a nondescript town Arab—with no pride, no appearance, no ambition—identical with the hundreds of Arab workmen and idlers whom I had seen at Oran, Sidi-bel-Abbes, Saïda, Ainalager, and elsewhere.

My heart leapt high when I found myself within a hundred yards of the first ship.

I looked up at the bow, its name was French, and I swallowed a sudden bitterness and passed on to the next ship. A French name again! Tears came unbidden to my eyes and I wiped my face with the back of my hand. . . . It would be suicide to stow away on a French ship. . . . The third ship—French! The fourth, French! The fifth, French! The sixth, French! . . . *Every ship in Oran was French!*

I sat down on a low wall, crushed under a new load of grief. To have come so far, to have suffered so much, to have Miller killed—all for nothing. The realisation of my failure bowed my shoulders as nothing else had done. The whole of me became one great sob. . . . So this was the end.

My teeth chattered with cold, my hands, my legs, my arms shook, as with the ague, yet I sat still on that low wall, unheeding and unheeded. . . . It was the end, and nothing to be done now except throw myself off the quay into the water. . . . How odd it was, after all these months, that I should come to follow the advice which at one time I had laughed at—the advice of the wounded legionnaire in the depot not a mile from where I was now sitting. “Go kill yourself in water sooner than be a legionnaire,” he had said. How sensible that advice sounded to me now.

The sharp blast of a whistle suddenly made me spring to my feet. God! How the Legion had “got” me. Here was I, springing to attention at the sound of a whistle, while the German sergeant at Ainalager was hundreds of kilometres away and the German sergeant of the fort was dead and buried hundreds of miles away. Yes, the Legion had “got” me.

I looked around listlessly to see whence the blast of the

whistle had come, and terror seized me once more. A dozen gendarmes were passing through the illuminated dock-gates and were beginning to examine the identity cards of every one within the docks.

Like a hunted animal I fled from them, climbed a high stone wall which separated the docks from I know not what, and dropped over the other side, uncaring whether the drop led to land or water. I fell heavily on to cobbled paving, picked myself up with bleeding hands, and knew from the first few steps I took that my left ankle had given way under me. But I pulled myself to the side of a big black shed and there lay panting in the shelter of a huge coil of rope.

Hunger, thirst, weariness. Sorrow, pain, hopelessness. They weighed me down now as never before. I lay for an hour before daring to move, and when at length I arose, there was not a single thought in my mind as to where I would go or what I would do. . . . Suddenly, the name "Arzeu" jumped into my mind. Where had I heard it before? What was it? Or where was it?

Then in a flash it came to me—the map, the map I had had at Ainalager. I had seen it on the map, but where? Then I remembered. It was on the coast, a few miles east of Oran. . . . But what of it? What did Arzeu mean to me? Why had it come into my mind like that?

I suddenly shivered, worse than before. The night was chilly, and my shirt and trousers gave me little protection from the sea air. I must keep in motion, I told myself, or die of exposure. . . . Die of exposure! What a mad ending to the mad adventure. . . . I heard myself laughing, but another violent shiver through my whole body quickly put an end to it.

On, Michael Donovan! On to your death, I told myself. On to Arzeu. Remain where you are, and you die. Move on and you die. . . . Heads I lose, tails you win! . . . Life is mad. I am mad. Every one is mad. But on, on to Arzeu. There will be water there, quite enough to drown me. And there will be ships, more of these damned French ships. Arzeu will end everything, one way or the other. . . . Just a few miles more.

It took me thirty-six hours to cover these "few miles more." Arzeu, I discovered, was about forty-eight kilometres away (thirty miles) and it was daybreak of the second day before I reached it. I stole fruit from roadside gardens throughout the two nights and drank my fill from a horse-trough at the

entrance to a big house a few kilometres out of Oran. . . . I had become so accustomed to pain that I was conscious of no discomfort throughout these thirty miles except the maddening heat of the sun near midday.

There was no one awake in Arzeu to wonder why I was so early astir, and I went straight to the waterfront in the hope of seeing a British ship. But once again I had the heart-breaking experience of seeing nothing but French names painted on the bows.

I was turning away with heart and brain on the verge of mutiny, when the word "HILL" caught my eye. I looked back, startled, fearing that my eyes had played me a trick, and once more read the names of the long line of ships. French! Every one of them!

But no! There it was again, the word "HILL," on the prow of a ship anchored behind the others. My eager eyes magnified that ship twentyfold and, clear as crystal, I saw the letters, MAINDY HILL. "Maindy Hill," I mused. . . . *English!* . . . She must be a British ship, or an American. . . . No matter which, I must get on board her before my eyes played me any more tricks.

Without wasting another second, and almost afraid to look again at the ship in case my eyes *had* deceived me, I plunged into the water and swam as best I could in the direction where I had seen the glorious name. The ship was anchored to a red buoy and when I reached the buoy, exhausted, I hung on to a loose piece of chain and rested myself.

Then, weak as I was, I did that chill morning what I do not think I would be able to do to-day. I pulled myself hand over hand up the long chain which passed from ship to buoy and found myself, with scarcely an ounce of strength left, on the ship's deck. Less than six feet from me was a big box arrangement filled with old sails, and I jumped into this after a single glance around to satisfy myself that no one had seen me.

I was safe. Safe! Safe! I pulled some of the sails on top of me, closed my eyes, and the overwhelming thought that I was free of all pursuit sent a heavenly feeling of comfort through my whole body. *Safe!* I could not realise it. . . . Then an icy chill shot through me. *Was I safe?* The water had been dripping from me when I came on board. I must have left a wet trail across six feet of deck. *Was I safe?* Would some of the crew chance to see that tell-tale wet mark, or would it have dried up by the time they were awake? *Was I safe?*

The idea came to me that I should dry up that mark on the deck with a piece of sail, but the heat of my body was beginning to make my hiding-place rather comfortable and I fell asleep before I could flog my will into carrying out the instructions of my mind.

Heavy feet were tramping the deck all around me when I awoke. A dozen times, it seemed, some one walked up to within a few inches of where I lay and a dozen times I looked fearfully up in the expectation of being discovered. But no. The footsteps passed by, succeeded by others a minute or two later, which in turn passed by, to be succeeded by others. . . . *I was safe!* . . . No one knew I was on board!

I heard the pleasant swish of water against the ship's side. I heard the steady throb of the ship's engines, and I thrilled all over to think that I was at sea. . . . At sea! . . . In Algeria no longer. In Morocco no more. . . . *At sea!* I was free, and at sea. I closed my eyes, and a wordless prayer of thankfulness went up from me, as heartfelt a prayer as mortal man can make.

Then came the sweetest music I have ever heard, a man's rough voice. "Aye, an' what's mair, the He'rts never had a look-in for the rest o' the game. They weren a patch on Hibs that season." That was all I could make out, the fragment of a football conversation, but the words warmed my heart as if it had been the voice of my own father. The Scots accent—how homely, how *beautiful* it was. . . . So I was amongst Scotsmen on this ship. So much the better. I had good reason to think highly of Scotsmen. There was Miller, for instance. God had never made a more noble soul than poor Miller. Poor Miller, dead.

With a sigh of contentment, I fell asleep once again. Never was there more comfortable bed made than that sail-box.

Something was gnawing me from within when I again awoke. I was refreshed, wonderfully refreshed, yet that something inside me would allow me no rest. . . . Hunger, good healthy hunger.

I had no means of estimating how long I had been on the ship, but the hunger warned me that it must have been forty-eight hours, at least. I had had ample opportunity since joining the Legion of becoming acquainted with the graduated degrees of semi-starvation and I reckoned that I had had nothing to eat or drink for fully two days. . . . The ship must be well out at sea by this time, I thought, for it had been in motion when I awoke the first time. . . . Everything would be all right. I was among Scotsmen. I must surrender



myself as a stowaway, at once. The hunger could no longer be denied.

So I pushed the sails to one side and stood up, feeling extremely weak in the legs.

I stepped over the low side of the sail-box, unnoticed, and with a hand on the deck-rail slowly made my way towards the bow, where a broad-shouldered seaman was standing with his back to me.

He turned round when he heard my footsteps and started back a pace. Then he stared at me as if he were looking at a ghost.

"Where the *hell* hae ye come frae?" he exclaimed, completely astonished.

"Give me something to eat. I'm starving," was all I could answer.

He continued to stare at me incredulously, and then shouted to another seaman who appeared from behind a hatchway. He in turn gave me a long, bewildered look, as if unable to believe his eyes. Soon I was surrounded by six or seven others, whom I told, in a few words, of my having escaped from the Legion.

"Come wi' me to the captain. He'll see everything put right," said one of the men kindly, and slipped his arm round my waist to assist me in walking. I was terribly weak and no doubt my unexpected appearance on board the ship was a bit startling to the men. If I looked as worn-out as I felt, I must have presented a pretty picture indeed.

The captain, Mr. Biglands, listened to me without making a single interruption. I told him, briefly, of everything that had happened to me—Boulogne, Dunkirk, Toulon, Marseilles, Oran, Sidi-bel-Abbes, Ainalager, Morocco—together with a fuller account of the escape. When he heard about poor Miller, I saw him swallow hard.

Ten minutes later I was sitting down to a meal fit for the gods. I ate, and ate, and ate until I could eat no more.

Then a pair of seaman's stout trousers, a seaman's stout jersey, and a seaman's stout jacket were given me to wear. I had the rare luxury of a wash and shave, a packet of cigarettes and a box of matches were pressed into my hand without a word, and I soon found myself sitting at ease on a bunk with a circle of friendly faces round me.

It seemed as if I had known that ship's crew all my life. They were my friends, every one of them, and I knew that they were interested in what had happened to me. They

wanted the full story of my experiences. . . . So I told them everything—everything that had happened to me since the day I joined the Legion. How they listened! How eager they were to hear every word! . . . But I am no great shakes at telling a story by word of mouth—or by pen either, for that matter—so I simply told them the bald facts. But I told them every fact, omitting nothing, and the night must have been far advanced before I was nearly finished.

“Dinna ye see the laud’s fair played oot? Let him get to his bed an’ we’ll hear the rest o’t in the mornin’,” broke in a rough voice, kindly, and the audience at once broke up, to return to my bunk in a few minutes with as many blankets as would have smothered me. I lay back, closed my eyes, and was instantly asleep.

Think of heaven and you have an exact picture of the days that followed. The captain and crew of the *Maindy Hill* vied one with the other in doing me kindnesses. Every soul on board was a Scotsman—with the exception of myself, of course—and a whole book written about their overwhelming kindness would not do justice to them. . . . I cannot give anything except a vague idea of their hospitality and generosity.

The *Mandy Hill* was a Fifeshire trader, I learned, plying between Scotland and the North African coast. The captain, Mr. Biglands, agreed to put me ashore at the first port of call, which was his home port of Methil, Fifeshire, and I offered to work my passage. Mr. Biglands thereupon gave a humorous look at my thin arms and advised me not to attempt anything of the sort until I was a bit stronger.

I would willingly have worked my fingers to the bone in order to repay in some measure the kindness of the captain and crew, but Fate would not allow it.

Three days after I had given myself up as a stowaway, I went down with typhoid fever. The captain immediately had a bunk rigged up for me in his own quarters. I was tended day and night with wonderful care, but I remember nothing more until the *Maindy Hill* put in to Methil, Fifeshire, where I was handed over to the care of a new angel in the form of a nurse.

I was taken to Cameron Infectious Diseases Hospital, Cameron Bridge, East Fifeshire, where I lay for ten weeks hovering between life and death. The skill, patience, and kindness of the matron, sisters, and nurses of that hospital, allied to the assistance of Dr. Skinner, Buckhaven, eventually

pulled me out of the new Valley of the Shadow of Death wherein I found myself, and to-day, by their miraculous care, I am alive.

I must have been a troublesome patient. Dozens of times did I awake during the night and imagine the sister's head-dress to be the turban of an Arab. Dozens of times was I held down on my bed by strong, friendly arms when every nerve in me was urging me to flee out of the stockade and fire down on the Arabs whom I saw crawling up the hill towards me. Dozens of times I saw the isolation ward crammed full of sneaking Arabs, every one of whom had a long curved knife in his hands, coming towards me—towards me. . . . I must have been a troublesome patient. And from the bottom of my heart I would publicly express my gratitude and thanks to the whole staff of that hospital. I owe my life to each one of them individually. Never will I forget Cameron Bridge, Fifeshire, as long as I live. *Never!*

I would also like to thank publicly the captain and crew of the *Maindy Hill*. I will carry the memory of their thousand kindnesses in my heart for all time. I owe my life to them, too, as completely as I owe it to Smithy, and the six-foot German. . . . *Maindy Hill* is a name that is inscribed deeply on my heart.

I have brought home some terrible memories with me—livid, ineffaceable—but one memory, radiant, beautiful, takes pride of place over all others, the memory of Jamie Miller, the man whom I loved as a brother, who lies buried in a nameless sand-hill somewhere in northern Algeria. May he rest in peace.

\* \* \* \* \*

My story is ended. I have no more to say. . . . But, hold! Yes, I have.

I have given you a straightforward, unvarnished account of what happened to me, and my escape after eight months' service in the French Foreign Legion. *Eight months!* How much more would have happened had I remained in the Legion for the whole of my five years' term of service? What might *not* have happened in that time? Anything is possible—in the Legion. I shudder to think what kind of a man I would have become, what kind of a *beast* I would have become, if I had remained in the Legion for five years.

These experiences which happened to me a few months ago are happening *to-day* to some one else. They will happen to-morrow, and the day after to-morrow, and they will happen

every day. . . . *Would you like them to happen to your own son, or to your own brother?*

No more would I.

So I have had the boldness to dedicate this poor literary effort of mine to the League of Nations, keeper of the world's conscience, in the hope that the world's conscience will be stirred.

# JOURNEY TO THE FORBIDDEN CITY

By

M. HUC

*In 1844 the Pope established an Apostolic Vicariat of Mongolia and MM. Gabet and Huc, two Lazarists attached to the French Mission of Si-Wang (a village north of the Great Wall of China) were deputed to explore and collect information about the new diocese. In circumstances of tremendous difficulty and discomfort they made their way to Lhasa, or Lha-Ssa, the capital of Tibet, where they remained until the Chinese minister ordered their deportation.*

*A few words used in the following extract may need explanation : tsamba is Tibetan barley-meal ; argols are dried dung, and constitute the only fuel in many parts of this country ; Samdadchiemba was a young Mongol who acted as servant to the two missionaries ; the Lama of the Ratchico Mountains was one of their cameleers whom they engaged, only to discover him to be a thief and a rogue, but whom they were compelled to take with them since they could not abandon him in the midst of a howling desert of ice.*

ON the 15th November, we quitted the magnificent plains of the Koukou-Noor, and entered upon the territory of the Mongols of Tsaidam. The long-tailed oxen and the camels regaled themselves with the nitre and salt which they had everywhere about for the picking up. The grand object with the whole caravan was to get up its strength as much as possible, with a view to the passage of the Bourhan-Bota, a mountain noted for the pestilential vapours in which, as we were informed, it is constantly enveloped.

We started at three in the morning, and after infinite sinuosities and meanderings over this hilly country, we arrived, by nine o'clock, at the foot of the Bourhan-Bota. There the caravan halted for a moment, as if to poise its strength ; every-

body measured, with his eyes, the steep and rugged paths of the lofty ascent, gazed with anxiety at a light, thin vapour which we were told was the pestilential vapour in question and for a while the entire party was completely depressed and discouraged. After having taken the hygienic measures prescribed by tradition, and which consist in masticating two or three cloves of garlic, we began to clamber up the side of the mountain. Before long, the horses refused to carry their riders, and all, men as well as animals, advanced on foot, and step by step ; by degrees, our faces grew pale, our hearts sick, and our legs incapable of supporting us ; we threw ourselves on the ground, then rose again to make another effort , then once more prostrated ourselves and again rose to stumble on some paces farther ; in this deplorable fashion was it that we ascended the famous Bourhan-Bota. Heavens ! what wretchedness it was we went through ; one's strength seemed exhausted, one's head turning round, one's limbs dislocated ; it was just like a thoroughly bad sea-sickness ; and yet, all the while, one has to retain enough energy, not only to drag one's self on, but, moreover, to keep thrashing the animals which lie down at every step, and can hardly be got to move. One portion of the caravan, as a measure of precaution, stopped half-way up the mountain, in a gully where the pestilential vapours, they said, were not so dense ; the other portion of the caravan, equally as a measure of precaution, exerted their most intense effort in order to make their way right up to the top, so as to avoid being asphyxiated by that dreadful air, so completely charged with carbonic acid. We were of the number of those who ascended the Bourhan-Bota at one stretch. On reaching its summit, our lungs dilated at their ease. The descent of the mountain was mere child's play, and we were soon able to set up our tent far from the murderous air we had encountered on the ascent.

The Bourhan-Bota mountain has this remarkable particularity, that the deleterious vapour for which it is noted, is only found on the sides facing the east and the north ; elsewhere, the air of the mountain is perfectly pure and respirable. The pestilential vapours themselves would appear to be nothing more than carbonic-acid gas. The people attached to the embassy told us that when there is any wind, the vapours are scarcely perceptible, but that they are very dangerous when the weather is calm and serene. Carbonic-acid gas being, as the reader is aware, heavier than the atmospheric air, necessarily condenses on the surface of the ground, and remains fixed

there until some great agitation of the air sets it in movement, disperses it in the atmosphere, and neutralises its effects. When we crossed the Bourhan-Bota, the weather was rather calm than otherwise. We remarked, that when we were lying on the ground, respiration was much more difficult ; when, on the contrary, we raised ourselves on horseback, the influence of the gas was scarcely felt. The presence of the carbonic acid rendered it very difficult to light a fire ; the argols burned without flame, and threw out great quantities of smoke. As to the manner in which the gas is formed, or as to whence it comes, we can give no sort of idea. We will merely add, for the benefit of those who are fond of seeking explanations of things in their names, that Bourhan-Bota means Kitchen of Bourhan ; Bourhan being a synonym of Buddha.

During the night we passed on the other side of the mountain, there fell a frightful quantity of snow. Our companions, who had not ventured to ascend the entire mountain at once, rejoined us in the morning ; they informed us that they had effected the ascent of the upper portion of the mountain easily enough, the snow having dispersed the vapour.

The passage of the Bourhan-Bota was but a sort of apprenticeship. A few days after, Mount Chuga put our strength and courage to a still more formidable test. The day's march being long and laborious, the cannon-shot, our signal for departure, was heard at one o'clock in the morning. We made our tea with melted snow, ate a good meal of tsamba, seasoned with a clove of garlic, cut up into small bits, and started. When the huge caravan first set itself in motion, the sky was clear, and a brilliant moon lit up the great carpet of snow with which the whole country was covered. Mount Chuga being not very steep in the direction where we approached it, we were able to attain the summit by sunrise. Almost immediately afterwards, however, the sky became thickly overcast with clouds, and the wind began to blow with a violence which grew constantly more and more intense. The opposite sides of the mountain we found so encumbered with snow, that the animals were up to their girths in it ; they could only advance by a series of convulsive efforts, which threw several of them into gulfs from which it was impossible to extricate them, and where they accordingly perished. We marched in the very teeth of a wind so strong and so icy, that it absolutely at times choked our respiration, and despite our thick furs, made us tremble lest we should be killed with

the cold. In order to avoid the whirlwinds of snow which the wind perpetually dashed in our faces, we adopted the example of some of our fellow-travellers, who best rode their horses' backs with their faces to the tail, leaving the animals to follow the guidance of their instinct. When we reached the foot of the mountain, and could use our eyes, we found that more than one face had been frozen in the descent. Poor M. Gabet, among the rest, had to deplore the temporary decease of his nose and ears. Everybody's skin was more or less chapped and cut.

The caravan halted at the foot of Mount Chuga, and each member of it sought refuge for a while in the labyrinths of a number of adjacent defiles. Exhausted with hunger, and our limbs thoroughly benumbed, what we wanted to bring us to was a good fire, a good supper, and a good well-warmed bed ; but the Chuga is far from possessing the comfortable features of the Alps ; no Buddhist monks have as yet bethought themselves of taking up their abode there for the solace and salvation of poor travellers. We were, consequently, fain to set up our tent amid the snow, and then to go in search of what argols we could burn. It was a spectacle worthy of all pity to see that multitude, wandering about in all directions, and rummaging up the snow, in the hope of lighting upon some charming thick bed of argols. For ourselves, after long and laborious research, we managed to collect just enough of the article to melt three great lumps of ice, which we extracted by aid of a hatchet from an adjacent pond. Our fire not being strong enough to boil the kettle, we had to content ourselves with infusing our tsamba in some tepid water, and gulping it down in order to prevent its freezing in our hands. Such was all the supper we had after our frightful day's journey. We then rolled ourselves up in our goat-skins and blankets, and, crouching in a corner of the tent, awaited the cannon-shot that was to summon us to our delightful "*Impressions de Voyage*."

We left in this picturesque and enchanting encampment, the Tartar soldiers who had escorted us since our departure from Koukou-Noor ; they were no longer able to extend to us their generous protection, for, that very day, we were about to quit Tartary, and to enter the territory of Hither Thibet. The Chinese and Tartar soldiers having thus left us, the embassy had now only to rely upon its own internal resources. As we have already stated, this great body of 2000 men was completely armed, and everyone, with the merest exception, had announced himself prepared to show himself, upon occasion, a good



soldier. But somehow or other the whilom so martial and valorous air of the caravan had become singularly modified since the passage of the Bourhan-Botâ. Nobody sang now, nobody joked, nobody laughed, nobody pranced about on his horse; everybody was dull and silent; the moustaches which heretofore had been so fiercely turned up, were now humbly veiled beneath the lamb-skins with which all our faces were covered up to the eyes. All our gallant soldiers had made up their lances, fusils, sabres, bows and arrows, into bundles, which were packed upon their sumpter animals. For that matter, the fear of being killed by the brigands scarcely occurred now to any one: the point was to avoid being killed by the cold.

It was on Mount Chuga that the long train of our real miseries really began. The snow, the wind, and the cold there set to work upon us, with a fury which daily increased. The deserts of Thibet are certainly the most frightful country that it is possible to conceive. The ground continuing to rise, vegetation diminished as we advanced, and the cold grew more and more intense. Death now hovered over the unfortunate caravan. The want of water and of pasturage soon destroyed the strength of our animals. Each day we had to abandon beasts of burden that could drag themselves on no further. The turn of the men came somewhat later. The aspect of the road was of dismal auspice. For several days, we travelled through what seemed the excavations of a great cemetery. Human bones and the carcasses of animals presenting themselves at every step, seemed to warn us that, in this fatal region, amidst this savage Nature, the caravans which had preceded us, had preceded us in death.

To complete our misery, M. Gabet fell ill, his health abandoning him just at the moment when the frightful difficulties of the route called for redoubled energy and courage. The excessive cold he had undergone on the passage of Mount Chuga, had entirely broken up his strength. To regain his previous vigour, he needed repose, tonic drinks, and a substantial nourishment, whereas all we had to give him was barley-meal, and tea made with snow water; and, moreover, notwithstanding his extreme weakness, he had every day to ride on horseback, and to struggle against an iron climate. And we had two months more of this travelling before us, in the depth of winter. Our prospect was, indeed, sombre!

Towards the commencement of September, we arrived in

sight of the Bayen-Kharat, a famous chain of mountains, extending from south-east to north-west, between the Hoang-Ho and the Kin-Cha-Kiang. These two great rivers, after running a parallel course on either side of the Bayen-Kharat, then separate, and take opposite directions, the one towards the north, the other towards the south. After a thousand capricious meanderings in Tartary and Thibet, they both enter the Chinese empire ; and after having watered it from west to east, they approach each other, towards their mouths, and fall into the Yellow Sea very nearly together. The point at which we crossed the Bayen-Kharat is not far from the sources of the Yellow River ; they lay on our left, and a couple of days' journey would have enabled us to visit them ; but this was by no means the season for pleasure trips. We had no fancy for a tourist's excursion to the sources of the Yellow River : how to cross the Bayen-Kharat was ample occupation for our thoughts.

From its foot to its summit the mountain was completely enveloped in a thick coat of snow. Before undertaking the ascent, the principal members of the embassy held a council. The question was not whether they should pass the mountain : if they desired to reach Lha-Ssa, the passage of the mountain was an essential preliminary ; nor was it the question, whether they should await the melting of the snow ; the point was simply whether it would be more advantageous to ascend the mountain at once or to wait till next day. The fear of avalanches filled every one's mind, and we should all have gladly subscribed to effect an assurance against the wind. After the example of all the councils in the world, the council of the Thibetian embassy was soon divided into two parties, the one contending that it would be better to start forthwith, the other insisting that we ought, by all means, to wait till the morrow.

To extricate themselves from this embarrassment, they had recourse to the Lamas, who had the reputation of being diviners. But this expedient did not combine all minds in unity. Among the diviners there were some who declared that this day would be calm, but that the next day there would be a terrible wind, and there were others who announced an exactly contrary opinion. The caravan thus became divided into two camps, that of movement and that of non-movement. It will at once be understood that in our character of French citizens, we instinctively placed ourselves in the ranks of the progressists ; that is to say, of those who desired to advance, and to have done with this villainous mountain as soon as possible. It appeared to us, moreover, that reason was altogether on our side. The

weather just then was perfectly calm ; but we knew not what it might be on the morrow. Our party, therefore, proceeded to scale these mountains of snow, sometimes on horseback, but more frequently on foot. In the latter case, we made our animals precede us, and we hung on to their tails, a mode of ascending mountains which is certainly the least fatiguing of all. M. Gabet suffered dreadfully, but God, of His infinite goodness, gave us strength and energy enough to reach the other side. The weather was calm throughout, and we were assailed by no avalanche whatever.

Next morning, at daybreak, the party who had remained behind, advanced and crossed the mountain with entire success. As we had had the politeness to wait for them, they joined us, and we entered together a valley where the temperature was comparatively mild. The excellence of the pasturage induced the caravan to take a day's rest here. A deep lake, in the ice of which we dug wells, supplied us with abundance of water. We had plenty of fuel too, for the embassies and pilgrimages being in the habit of halting in the valley, after the passage of the Bayen-Kharat, one is always sure to find plenty of argols there. We all kept up great fires throughout our stay, burning all the burnable things we could find, without the smallest consideration for our successors, leaving it to our 15,000 long-haired oxen to supply the deficit.

We quitted the great valley of Bayen-Kharat, and set up our tents on the banks of the Mouroui-Oussou, or, as the Thibetians call it, Polei-Tchou (river of the Lord). Towards its source, this magnificent river bears the name of Mouroui-Oussou (tortuous river) ; further on it is called Kin-Cha-Kiang (river of golden sand), and arrived in the province of Sse-Tchouan, it becomes the famous Yang-Dze-Kiang (blue river). As we were passing the Mouroui-Oussou, on the ice, a singular spectacle presented itself. We had previously, from our encampment, observed dark, shapeless masses ranged across this great river ; and it was not until we came quite close to these fantastic islets that we could at all make head or tail of them. Then we found out that they were neither more nor less than upwards of fifty wild cattle, absolutely encrusted in the ice. They had no doubt attempted to swim across the river, at the precise moment of the concretion of the waters, and had been so hemmed in by the flakes as to be unable to extricate themselves. Their fine heads, surmounted with great horns, were still above the surface ; the rest of the bodies was enclosed by the ice, which was so transparent as to give a full view of the

form and position of the unlucky animals, which looked as though they were still swimming. The eagles and crows had pecked out their eyes.

Wild cattle are of frequent occurrence in the deserts of Hither Thibet. They always live in great herds, and prefer the summits of the mountains. During the summer, indeed, they descend into the valleys in order to quench their thirst in the streams and ponds ; but throughout the long winter season they remain on the heights feeding on snow, and on a very hard rough grass they find there. These animals, which are of enormous size, with long black hair, are especially remarkable for the immense dimensions and splendid form of their horns. It is not at all prudent to hunt them, for they are said to be extremely ferocious. When, indeed, you find two or three of them separated from the main herd, you may venture to attack them ; but the assailants must be numerous, in order to make sure of their game, for if they do not kill the animal at once there is decided danger of his killing them. One day we perceived one of these creatures licking up the nitre in a small place encircled with rocks. Eight men, armed with matchlocks, left the caravan, and posted themselves in ambush, without being detected by the bull. Eight gun-shots were fired at once ; the bull raised his head, looked round with fiery eyes in search of the places whence he had been assailed, and then dashed over the rocks into the plain, where he tore about furiously, roaring awfully. The hunters affirmed that he had been wounded, but that, intimidated by the appearance of the caravan, he had not ventured to turn upon his assailants.

Wild mules are also very numerous in Hither Tartary. After we had passed the Mouroui-Oussou we saw some almost every day. This animal, which our naturalists call *cheval hémione*, a horse half-ass, is of the size of an ordinary mule ; but its form is finer and its movements more graceful and active ; its hair, red on the back, grows lighter and lighter down to the belly, where it is almost white. The head, large and ugly, is wholly at variance with the elegance of its body ; when in slow motion, it carries its head erect, and its long ears extended ; when it gallops, it turns its head to the wind, and raises its tail, which exactly resembles that of the ordinary mule ; its neigh is ringing, clear, and sonorous, and its speed so great that no Thibetian or Tartar horseman can overtake it. The mode of taking it is to post oneself in ambush near the places that lead to the springs where they drink, and to shoot it with arrows or bullets : the flesh is excellent, and the skins are converted into

boots. The *hémiones* are productive, and their young, from generation to generation, are always of the same species. They have never been tamed to domestic purposes. We heard of individuals having been taken quite young, and brought up with other foals ; but it has always been found impracticable to mount them or to get them to carry any burden. With the first opportunity they run away, and resume their wild state. It did not, however, appear to us that they were so extremely fierce as they were represented : we have seen them frolicking about with the horses of our caravan, when pasturing ; and it was only on the approach of man, whom they see and scent at a great distance, that they took to flight. The lynx, the chamois, the reindeer, and the wild goat abound in Hither Tartary.

Some days after the passage of the Mouroui-Oussou, the caravan began to break up ; those who had camels went on ahead, refusing to be any longer delayed by the slow progress of the long-haired oxen. Besides, the nature of the country no longer permitted so large a body to encamp on one spot. The pasturages became so scarce and meagre, that the animals of the caravan could not travel all together, without the danger of starving all together. We joined the camel party, and soon left behind us the long-haired oxen. The camel party itself was before long fain to subdivide ; and the grand unity once broken, there were formed a number of petty caravans, which did not always concur, either as to the place of encampment or the hour of departure.

We were imperceptibly attaining the highest point of Upper Asia, when a terrible north wind, which lasted fifteen days, combined with the fearful severity of the temperature, menaced us with destruction. The weather was still clear ; but the cold was so intense that even at midday we scarcely felt the influence of the sun's rays, and then we had the utmost difficulty in standing against the wind. During the rest of the day, and more especially during the night, we were under constant apprehension of dying with cold. Everybody's face and hands were regularly ploughed up. To give something like an idea of this cold, the reality of which, however, can never be appreciated, except by those who have felt it, it may suffice to mention a circumstance which seemed to us rather striking. Every morning, before proceeding on our journey, we ate a meal, and then we did not eat again until the evening, after we had encamped. As *tsamba* is not a very toothsome affair, we could not get down, at a time, as much as was required for our

nourishment during the day ; so we used to make three or four balls of it, with our tea, and keep these in reserve, to be eaten, from time to time, on our road. The hot paste was wrapped in a piece of hot linen, and then deposited in our breast. Over it were all our clothes ; to wit, a thick robe of sheep-skin, then a lamb-skin jacket, then a short fox-skin cloak, and then a great wool overall ; now, upon every one of the fifteen days in question, our tsamba cakes were always frozen. When we took them out, they were merely so many balls of ice, which, notwithstanding, we were fain to devour, at the risk of breaking our teeth, in order to avoid the greater risk of starvation.

The animals, overcome with fatigue and privation, had infinite difficulty in at all resisting the intensity of the cold. The mules and horses, being less vigorous than the camels and long-haired oxen, required especial attention. We were obliged to pack them in great pieces of carpet, carefully fastened round the body, the head being enveloped in rolls of camel's hair. Under any other circumstances this singular costume would have excited our hilarity, but just then we were in no laughing mood. Despite all these precautions, the animals of the caravan were decimated by death.

The numerous rivers that we had to pass upon the ice were another source of inconceivable misery and fatigue. Camels are so awkward and their walk is so uncouth and heavy, that in order to facilitate their passage, we were compelled to make a path for them across each river, either by strewing sand and dust, or by breaking the first coat of ice with our hatchets. After this, we had to take the brutes, one by one, and guide them carefully over the path thus traced out ; if they had the ill-luck to stumble or slip, it was all over with them ; down they threw themselves on the ice, and it was only with the utmost labour they could be got up again. We had first to take off their baggage, then to drag them with ropes to the bank, and then to stretch a carpet on which they might be induced to rise ; sometimes all this labour was lost : you might beat the obstinate animals, pull them, kick them ; not an effort would they make to get on their legs ; in such cases, the only course was to leave them where they lay, for it was clearly impossible to wait, in those hideous localities, until the pig-headed brute chose to rise.

All these combined miseries ended in casting the poor travellers into a depression bordering on despair. To the mortality of the animals, was now added that of the men, who,

hopelessly seized upon by the cold, were abandoned, yet living, on the road. One day, when the exhaustion of our animals had compelled us to relax our march, so that we were somewhat behind the main body, we perceived a traveller sitting on a great stone, his head bent forward on his chest, his arms pressed against his sides, and his whole frame motionless as a statue. We called to him several times, but he made no reply, and did not even indicate, by the slightest movement, that he heard us. "How absurd," said we to each other, "for a man to loiter in this way in such dreadful weather. The wretched fellow will assuredly die of cold." We called to him once more, but he remained silent and motionless as before. We dismounted, went up to him, and recognised in him a young Mongol Lama, who had often paid us a visit in our tent. His face was exactly like wax, and his eyes, half-opened, had a glassy appearance; icicles hung from his nostrils and from the corners of his mouth. We spoke to him, but obtained no answer, and for a moment we thought him dead. Presently, however, he opened his eyes, and fixed them upon us with a horrible expression of stupefaction: the poor creature was frozen, and we comprehended at once that he had been abandoned by his companions. It seemed to us so frightful to leave a man to die, without making an effort to save him, that we did not hesitate to take him with us. We took him from the stone on which he had been placed, enveloped him in a wrapper, seated him upon Samdadchiemba's little mule, and thus brought him to the encampment. When we had set up our tent, we went to visit the companions of this poor young man. Upon our informing them what we had done, they prostrated themselves in token of thanks, and said that we were people of excellent hearts, but that we had given ourselves much labour in vain, for that the case was beyond cure. "He is frozen," said they, "and nothing can prevent the cold from getting to his heart." We ourselves did not participate in this despairing view of the case, and we returned to our tent, accompanied by one of the patient's companions, to see what further could be done. When we reached our temporary home, the young Lama was dead.

More than forty men of the caravan were abandoned still living, in the desert, without the slightest possibility of our aiding them. They were carried on horseback and on camelback so long as any hope remained, but when they could no longer eat, or speak, or hold themselves up, they were left on the wayside. The general body of the caravan could not stay

to nurse them, in a barren desert, where there was hourly danger of wild beasts, of robbers, and worse than all, of a deficiency of food. Yet, it was a fearful spectacle to see these dying men abandoned on the road ! As a last token of sympathy, we placed beside each, a wooden cup and a small bag of barley meal, and then the caravan mournfully proceeded on its way. As soon as the last straggler had passed on, the crows and vultures that incessantly hovered above the caravan, would pounce down upon the unhappy creatures who retained just enough of life to feel themselves torn and mangled by these birds of prey.

The north wind greatly aggravated M. Gabet's malady. From day to day his condition grew more alarming. His extreme weakness would not permit him to walk, and being thus precluded from warming himself by means of a little exercise, his feet, hands, and face were completely frozen, his lips became livid, and his eyes almost extinct ; by-and-by he was not able to support himself on horseback. Our only remedy was to wrap him in blankets, to pack him upon a camel, and to leave the rest to the merciful goodness of Divine Providence.

One day, as we were following the sinuosities of a valley, our hearts oppressed with sad thoughts, all of a sudden we perceived two horsemen make their appearance on the ridge of an adjacent hill. At this time, we were travelling in the company of a small party of Thibetian merchants, who, like ourselves, had allowed the main body of the caravan to precede them, in order to save their camels the fatigue of a too hurried march. "Tsong-Kaba," cried the Thibetians, "see, there are horsemen yonder, yet we are in the desert, and every one knows that there are not even shepherds in this locality." They had scarcely uttered these words, when a number of other horsemen appeared at different points on the hills, and, to our extreme alarm, dashed down towards us at a gallop. What could these horsemen be doing in so barren a region ? What could they want with us ? The case was clear : we had fallen into the hands of thieves. Their appearance, as they approached, was anything but reassuring : a carbine slung at the saddle-bow, two long sabres in the girdle, thick black hair falling in disorder over the shoulders, glaring eyes, and a wolf's skin stuck on the head by way of cap ; such was the portrait of each of the gentlemen who now favoured us with their company. There were twenty-seven of them, while we numbered only eighteen, of which eighteen all were by no means practised warriors.



However, both armies alighted, and a valorous Thibetian of our party advanced to parley with the chief of the brigands, who was distinguished from his men by two red pennants which floated from his saddle back. After a long and somewhat animated conversation : " Who is that man ? " asked the chief of the Kolo, pointing to M. Gabet, who, fastened upon his camel, was the only person who had not alighted. " He is a Grand Lama of the western sky," replied the Thibetian merchant ; " the power of his prayers is infinite." The Kolo raised his clasped hands to his forehead, in token of respect, and looked at M. Gabet, who, with his frozen face, and his singular envelope of many-coloured wrappers, was by no means unlike those alarming idols that we see in pagan temples. After contemplating for a while the famous Lama of the western sky, the brigand addressed some further words, in an undertone, to the Thibetian merchant ; then, making a sign to his companions, they all jumped into their saddles, set off at a gallop, and soon disappeared behind the mountains. " Do not let us go any further to-day," said the Thibetian merchant ; " but set up our tents where we are ; the Kolo are robbers, but they have lofty and generous souls ; when they see that we place ourselves without fear in their hands, they will not attack us. Besides," added he, " I believe they hold in much awe the power of the Lamas of the western sky." We adopted the counsel of the Thibetian merchants, and proceeded to encamp.

The tents were scarcely set up, when the Kolo reappeared on the crest of the mountain, and once more galloped down upon us with their habitual impetuosity. The chief alone entered the encampment, his men awaiting him at a short distance outside. The Kolo addressed the Thibetian who had previously conversed with him. " I have come," said he, " for an explanation of a point that I don't at all understand. You know that we are encamped on the other side of the mountain, yet you venture to set up your tents here, close by us. How many men, then, have you in your company ? " " We are only eighteen ; you, I believe, are twenty-seven in number ; but brave men never run away." " You'll fight then ? " " If there were not several invalids amongst us, I would answer Yes ; for I have already shown the Kolo that I am not afraid of them." " Have you fought with the Kolo ? When was it ? What's your name ? " " It's five years ago, at the affair of the Tchanak-Kampo, and here's a little reminiscence of it " ; and, throwing back the sleeve of his right arm, he showed the cicatrice of a great sabre cut. The brigand laughed, and again

requested his interlocutor's name. "I am called Rala-Tchembe," said the merchant; "you ought to know the name." "Yes, all the Kolos know it; it is the name of a brave man." So saying, he dismounted, and taking a sabre from his girdle, presented it to the Thibetian. "Here," said he, "accept this sabre; 'tis the best I have; we have fought one another before; in future, when we meet, it shall be as brothers." The Thibetian received the brigand's present, and gave him in return, a handsome bow and quiver which he had bought at Peking.

The Kolo, who had remained outside the camp, upon seeing their chief fraternise with the chief of the caravan, dismounted, fastened their horses to each other, two and two, by the bridles, and came to drink a friendly cup of tea with the travellers, who now, at length, began to breathe freely. All these brigands were extremely affable, and they asked us various questions about the Tartar-Khalkhas, whom, they said, they were particularly anxious to see, by reason that, in the preceding year, these warriors had killed three of their companions, whom they were eager to avenge. We had a little chat about politics, too. The brigands affirmed that they were warm friends of the Talé-Lama, and irreconcilable enemies to the Emperor of China; on which account they seldom failed to pillage the embassy on its way to Peking, because the Emperor was unworthy to receive gifts from the Talé-Lama, but that they ordinarily respected it on its return, because it was altogether fitting that the Emperor should send gifts to the Talé-Lama. After having done honour to the tea and tsamba of the caravan, the brigands wished us a good journey, and returned to their own encampment. All these fraternal manifestations did not prevent our sleeping with one eye open; our repose, however, was not disturbed, and in the morning we resumed our way in peace. Of the many thousands of pilgrims who have performed the journey to Lha-Ssa, there are very few who can boast of having had so close a view of the robbers, at so small a cost.

We had escaped one great danger; but another awaited us, we were informed, far more formidable in its character, though different in kind. We were beginning to ascend the vast chain of the Tant-La mountains, on the plateau of which, our travelling companions assured us, the invalids would die, and those who were now well would become invalids, with but a small chance of living. The death of M. Gabet was considered quite a matter of certainty. After six days' laborious

ascent of several mountains, placed amphitheatrically, one above another, we at length reached the famous plateau, the most elevated point, perhaps, on the earth's surface. The snow there appeared an incrustation, an ordinary portion of the soil. It cracked beneath our feet, but the feet left scarcely any impression upon it. The entire vegetation consisted of an occasional tuft of a low, sharp-pointed, smooth grass, ligneous within, and as hard as iron, but not brittle ; so that it might very well be converted into mattress needles. The animals were, however, so famishing, that they were fain to attack even this atrocious forage, which absolutely cracked between their teeth, and could be realised at all only by vigorous efforts and at the cost of infinite lip bleeding.

From the brow of this magnificent plateau, we could see below us the peaks and needles of numerous ridges, the ramifications of which were lost in the horizon. We had never witnessed anything at all comparable with this grand, this gigantic spectacle. During the twelve days that we were journeying along the heights of Tant-La, we enjoyed fine weather ; the air was calm, and it pleased God to bless us each day with a warm, genial sunshine, that materially modified the ordinary coldness of the atmosphere. Still the air, excessively rarified at that enormous altitude, was very piercing, and monstrous eagles, which followed the track of the caravan, were daily provided with a number of dead bodies. The small caravan of the French mission itself paid its tribute to death ; but, happily, that tribute was only in the shape of our little black mule, which we abandoned at once with regret and with resignation. The dismal prophecy that had been announced with reference to M. Gabet was falsified. The mountains, which were to have been fatal to him, proved, on the contrary, highly favourable, restoring to him, by degrees, health and strength. This blessing, almost unexpected by us, even at the hands of the God of Mercy, made us forget all our past miseries. We resumed all our courage, and firmly entertained the hope that the Almighty would permit us to accomplish our journey.

The descent of Tant-La, though long in duration, was rapid in itself. Throughout four whole days, we were going down, as it seemed, a gigantic staircase, each step of which consisted of a mountain. At the bottom, we found some hot springs, of an extremely magnificent description. Amongst huge rocks, you see a great number of reservoirs, hollowed out by the hand of Nature, in which the water boils and bubbles, as in a vast cauldron over a fierce fire. Sometimes the active fluid escapes

through the fissures of the rocks, and leaps, in all directions, by a thousand capricious jets. Every now and then the ebullition, in particular reservoirs, grows so furious, that tall columns of water rise into the air, as though impelled by some tremendous pumping machinery. Above these springs, thick vapours, collecting in the air, condense into white clouds. The water is sulphureous. After bubbling and dashing about in its huge granite reservoirs, it boils over, and quitting the rocks, which had seemed to wish to keep it captive, pours down by various currents into a small valley below, where it forms a large stream flowing over a bed of flints, yellow as gold. These boiling waters do not long preserve their fluidity. The extreme rigour of the atmosphere cools them so rapidly, that within a mile and a half from its source the stream they have thus formed is almost frozen through. These hot springs are of frequent occurrence in the mountains of Thibet, and the Lama physicians, who attribute to them considerable medicinal virtue, constantly prescribe their use, both internally and externally.

From the Tant-La mountains to Lha-Ssa, the ground constantly declines. As you descend, the intensity of the cold diminishes, and the earth becomes clothed with more vigorous and more varied vegetation. One evening, we encamped in a large plain, where the pasturage was marvellously abundant, and as our cattle had been for some time past on very short commons indeed, we determined to give them the full benefit of the present opportunity, and to remain where we were for two days.

Next morning, as we were quietly preparing our tea, we perceived in the distance a troop of horsemen galloping towards our encampment at full speed. The sight seemed to freeze the very blood in our veins ; we stood for a moment perfectly petrified. After the first moment of stupor, we rushed out of our tent, and ran to Rala-Tchembe. " The Kolo ! the Kolo ! " cried we ; " here's a great body of Kolo advancing against us." The Thibetian merchants, who were boiling their tea and mixing their tsamba, laughed at our alarm, and told us to sit down quite at our ease. " Take breakfast with us," said they ; " there are no Kolo to fear here ; the horsemen you see yonder are friends. We are now entering upon an inhabited country ; behind the hill there, to the right, are a number of black tents, and the horsemen, whom you take to be Kolo, are shepherds." These words restored our equanimity, and with our equanimity returned our appetite, so that we were very happy to accept the invitation to breakfast with which we had been

favoured. We had scarcely taken up a cup of buttered tea before the horsemen made their appearance at the door of the tent. So far from being brigands, they were worthy fellows who came to sell us butter and fresh meat ; their saddles were regular butchers' stalls hung with joints of mutton and venison, which rested on the sides of their horses. We purchased eight legs of mutton, which, being frozen, were easily susceptible of transport. They cost us an old pair of Peking boots, a Peking steel, and the saddle of our defunct mule, which luckily could also boast of Peking origin. Everything coming from Peking is highly prized by the Thibetians, more especially by that portion of the population which has not advanced beyond the pastoral and nomadic life. The merchants who accompany the caravan take care, accordingly, to label every package "Goods from Peking." Snuff is especially an object of earnest competition among the Thibetians. All the shepherds asked us whether we had not snuff from Peking. M. Huc, who was the only snuff-taker of our party, had formerly possessed a quantity of the precious commodity, but it had all departed, and for the last eight days he had been reduced to the necessity of filling his snuff-box and his nose with a frightful mixture of dust and ashes. Those who are devotees of snuff, will at once comprehend all the horrors to poor M. Huc of this deplorable position.

Condemned for the last two months to live upon barley-meal, moistened with tea, the mere sight of our legs of mutton seemed to fortify our stomachs and invigorate our emaciated limbs. The remainder of the day was occupied in culinary preparations. By way of condiment and seasoning, we had only a little garlic, and that little so frozen and dried, that it was almost imperceptible in its shell. We peeled, however, all we had, and stuck it into two legs of mutton, which we set to boil in our great cauldron. The argols, which abounded in this blessed plain, supplied ample materials for cooking our inestimable supper. The sun was just setting, and Samdad-chiemba, who had been inspecting one of the legs of mutton with his thumb-nail, had triumphantly announced that the mutton was boiled to a bubble, when we heard in all directions, the disastrous cry, "Fire ! fire !" (*Mi yon ! mi yon !*) At one bound we were outside our tent, where we found that the flame, which had caught some dry grass, in the interior of the encampment, and menaced to assail also our linen tents, was spreading about, in all directions, with fearful rapidity. All the travellers, armed with their felt carpets, were endeavouring to stifle the flame, or at all events to keep it from reaching the

tents, and in this latter effort they were quite successful. The fire, repulsed on all sides, forced an issue from the encampment, and rushed out into the desert, where, driven by the wind, it spread over the pasturages, which it devoured as it went. We thought, however, that we had nothing further to fear ; but the cry, " Save the camels ! save the camels ! " at once reminded us how little we knew of a conflagration in the desert. We soon perceived that the camels stolidly awaited the flame, instead of fleeing from it, as the horses and oxen did. We hereupon hastened to the succour of our beasts, which, at the moment, seemed tolerably remote from the flame. The flame, however, reached them as soon as we did, and at once surrounded us and them. It was to no purpose we pushed and beat the stupid brutes ; not an inch would they stir ; but there they stood phlegmatically gaping at us with an air that seemed to ask us, what right we had to come and interrupt them at their meals. We really felt as if we could have killed the impracticable beasts. The fire consumed so rapidly the grass it encountered, that it soon assailed the camels, and caught their long, thick hair ; and it was with the utmost exertion that, by the aid of the felt carpets we had brought with us, we extinguished the flame upon their bodies. We got three of them out of the fire, with only the end of their hair singed, but the fourth was reduced to a deplorable condition ; not a bristle remained on its entire body ; the whole system of hair was burned down to the skin, and the skin itself was terribly charred.

The extent of pasturage consumed by the flame might be about a mile and a quarter long by three quarters of a mile broad. The Thibetians were in ecstasies at their good fortune in having the progress of conflagration so soon stayed, and we fully participated in their joy, when we learned the full extent of the evil with which we had been menaced. We were informed that if the fire had continued much longer it would have reached the black tents, in which case the shepherds would have pursued and infallibly massacred us. Nothing can equal the fury of these poor children of the desert when they find the pastures, which are their only resource, reduced to ashes, no matter whether by malice or by mischance. It is much the same thing to them as destroying their herds.

When we resumed our journey the broiled camel was not yet dead, but it was altogether incapable of service ; the three others were fain to yield to circumstances, and to share among them the portion of baggage which their unlucky travelling companion had hitherto borne. However, the burdens of all

of them had very materially diminished in weight since our departure from Koukou-Noor ; our sacks of meal had become little better than sacks of emptiness ; so that, after descending the Tant-La mountains we had been compelled to put ourselves upon an allowance of two cups of tsamba per man, per diem. Before our departure we had made a fair calculation of our reasonable wants, *in prospectu* ; but no such calculation could cover the waste committed upon our provender by our two cameleers ; by the one through indifference and stupidity, by the other through malice and knavery.

Fortunately, we were now approaching a large Thibetian station, where we should find the means of renewing our stores.

After following, for several days, a long series of valleys, where we saw, from time to time, black tents and great herds of yaks, we at last encamped beside a large Thibetian village. It stands on the banks of the river Na-Ptchu, indicated on M. Andriveau-Goujon's map by the Mongol name of Khara-Oussou, both denominations equally signifying black waters. The village of Na-Ptchu is the first Thibetian station of any importance that you pass on this route to Lha-Ssa. The village consists of mud-houses and a number of black tents. The inhabitants do not cultivate the ground. Although they always live on the same spot, they are shepherds like the nomadic tribes, and occupy themselves solely with the breeding of cattle. We were informed that at some very remote period, a king of Koukou-Noor made war upon the Thibetians, and having subjugated them to a large extent, gave the district of Na-Ptchu to the soldiers whom he had brought with him. Though these Tartars are now fused with the Thibetians, one may still observe among the black tents, a certain number of Mongol huts. This event may also serve to explain the origin of a number of Mongol expressions which are used in the country, having passed within the domain of the Thibetian idiom.

The caravans which repair to Lha-Ssa, are necessitated to remain several days at Na-Ptchu, in order to arrange a fresh system of conveyance ; for the difficulties of an awfully rocky road do not permit camels to proceed farther. Our first business, therefore, was to sell our animals ; but they were so wretchedly worn that no one would look at them. At last, a sort of veterinary surgeon, who, doubtless, had some recipe for restoring their strength and appearances, made us an offer, and we sold him the three for fifteen ounces of silver, throwing in the grilled one into the bargain. These fifteen ounces of silver just

sufficed to pay the hire of six long-haired oxen to carry our baggage to Lha-Ssa.

A second operation was to discharge the Lama of the Ratchico mountains. After having settled with him on very liberal terms, we told him that if he proposed to visit Lha-Ssa, he must find some other companions, for that he might consider himself wholly freed from the engagements which he had contracted with us ; and so, at last, we got rid of this rascal, whose misconduct had fully doubled the trouble and misery that we had experienced on the way in his company.

Our conscience imposes upon us the duty of here warning persons whom any circumstances may lead to Na-Ptchu, to be carefully on their guard there against thieves. The inhabitants of this Thibetian village are remarkable for their peculations, robbing every Mongol or other caravan that comes to the place, in the most shameful manner. At night, they creep into the travellers' tents, and carry off whatever they can lay hands upon ; and in broad day itself they exercise their deplorable ingenuity in this line, with a coolness, a presence of mind, and an ability which might arouse envy in the most distinguished Parisian thieves.

After having laid in a supply of butter, tsamba, and legs of mutton, we proceeded on our way to Lha-Ssa, from which we were now only distant fifteen days' march. Our travelling companions were some Mongols of the kingdom of Khartchin, who were repairing in pilgrimage to Mouhe-Dehot (the Eternal Sanctuary) as the Tartars call Lha-Ssa, and who had with them their Grand Chaberon ; that is to say, a Living Buddha, the superior of their Lamasery. This Chaberon was a young man of eighteen, whose manners were agreeable and gentlemanly, and whose face, full of ingenuous candour, contrasted singularly with the part which he was constrained habitually to enact. At the age of five he had been declared Buddha and Grand Lama of the Buddhists of Khartchin, and he was now about to pass a few years in one of the Grand Lamaseries of Lha-Ssa, in the study of prayers and of the other knowledge befitting his dignity. A brother of the King of Khartchin and several Lamas of quality were in attendance to escort and wait upon him. The title of Living Buddha seemed to be a dead weight upon this poor young man. It was quite manifest that he would very much have liked to laugh and chat and frolic about at his ease ; and that, *en route*, it would have been far more agreeable to him to have dashed about on his horse, whither he fancied, than to ride, as he did, solemnly between two horsemen, who,



out of their extreme respect, never once quitted his sides. Again, when they had reached an encampment, instead of remaining eternally squatted on cushions, in a corner of his tent, apeing the idols in the Lamasery, he would have liked to have rambled about the desert, taking part in the occupations of nomadic life ; but he was permitted to do nothing of the sort. His business was to be Buddha, and to concern himself in no degree with matters which appertained to mere mortals.

The young Chaberon derived no small pleasure from an occasional chat in our tent ; there, at all events, he was able to lay aside, for a time, his official divinity, and to belong to mankind. He heard with great interest what we told him about the men and things of Europe ; and questioned us, with much ingenuity, respecting our religion, which evidently appeared to him a very fine one. When we asked him whether it would not be better to be a worshipper of Jehovah than a Chaberon, he replied that he could not say. He did not at all like us to interrogate him respecting his anterior life and his continual incarnations ; he would blush when any such questions were put to him, and would always put an end to the conversation by saying that the subject was painful to him. The simple fact was that the poor lad found himself involved in a sort of religious labyrinth, the meanderings of which were perfectly unknown to him.

The road which leads from Na-Ptchu to Lha-Ssa, is, in general, rocky and very laborious, and when it attains the chain of the Koiran mountains it becomes fatiguing in the highest degree. Yet, as you advance, your heart grows lighter and lighter at finding yourself in a more and more populous country. The black tents that speckle the background of the landscape, the numerous parties of pilgrims repairing to Lha-Ssa, the infinite inscriptions engraved on the stones erected on each side of the way, the small caravans of long-tailed oxen that you meet at intervals—all this contributes to alleviate the fatigues of the journey.

When you come within a few days' march of Lha-Ssa, the exclusively nomadic character of the Thibetians gradually disappears. Already, a few cultivated fields adorn the desert ; houses insensibly take the place of black tents. At length, the shepherds vanish altogether, and you find yourself amidst an agricultural people.

On the fifteenth day after our departure from Na-Ptchu, we arrived at Pampou, which, on account of its proximity to Lha-Ssa is regarded by the pilgrims as the vestibule of the holy

city. Pampou, erroneously designated Panctou on the map, is a fine plain watered by a broad river, a portion of whose stream, distributed in canals, diffuses fertility all around. There is no village, properly so called ; but you see, in all directions, large farmhouses with handsome terraces in front, and beautifully white with lime-wash. Each is surrounded with tall trees, and surmounted with a little tower, in the form of a pigeon-house, whence float banners of various colours, covered with Thibetian inscriptions. After travelling for more than three months through hideous deserts, where the only living creatures you meet are brigands and wild beasts, the plain of Pampou seemed to us the most delicious spot in the world. Our long and painful journeying had so nearly reduced us to the savage state, that anything in the shape of civilisation struck us as absolutely marvellous. We were in ecstasies with everything : a house, a tree, a plough, a furrow in the ploughed field, the slightest object seemed to us worthy of attention. That, however, which most forcibly impressed us, was the prodigious elevation of the temperature which we remarked in this cultivated plain. Although it was now the end of January, the river and its canals were merely edged with a thin coat of ice, and scarcely any of the people wore furs.

At Pampou, our caravan had to undergo another transformation. Generally speaking, the long-haired oxen are here replaced by donkeys, small in size, but very robust, and accustomed to carry baggage. The difficulty of procuring a sufficient number of these donkeys to convey the baggage of the Khartchin-Lamas, rendered it necessary for us to remain two days at Pampou. We availed ourselves of the opportunity to arrange our toilet as well as we could. Our hair and beards were so thick, our faces so blackened with the smoke of the tent, so ploughed up with the cold, so worn, so deplorable, that, when we had here the means of looking at ourselves in a glass, we were ready to weep with compassion at our melancholy appearance. Our costume was perfectly in unison with our persons.

The people of Pampou are for the most part in very easy circumstances, and they are always gay and frolicsome accordingly. Every evening they assemble in front of the different farms, where men, women, and children dance to the accompaniment of their own voices. On the termination of the *bal champêtre*, the farmer regales the company with a sort of sharp drink, made with fermented barley, and which, with the addition of hops, would be very like our beer.

After a two days' hunt through all the farms of the neighbourhood the donkey-caravan was organised, and we went on our way. Between us and Lha-Ssa there was only a mountain, but this mountain was, past contradiction, the most rugged and toilsome that we had as yet encountered. The Thibetians and Mongols ascend it with great unction, for it is understood amongst them that whoever attains its summit, attains, *ipso facto*, a remission of all his or her sins. This is certain, at all events, that whoever attains the summit has undergone on his way a most severe penance : whether that penance is adequate to the remission of sins, is another question altogether. We had departed at one o'clock in the morning, yet it was not till ten in the forenoon that we reached this so beneficial summit. We were fain to walk nearly the whole distance, so impracticable is it to retain one's seat on horseback along the rugged and rocky path.

The sun was nearly setting when, issuing from the last of the infinite sinuosities of the mountain, we found ourselves in a vast plain, and saw on our right Lha-Ssa, the famous metropolis of the Buddhic world. The multitude of aged trees which surround the city with a verdant wall ; the tall white houses with their flat roofs and their towers ; the numerous temples with their gilt roofs, the Buddha-La, above which rises the palace of the Talé-Lama—all these features communicate to Lha-Ssa a majestic and imposing aspect.

At the entrance of the town, some Mongols with whom we had formed an acquaintance on the road, and who had preceded us by several days, met us, and invited us to accompany them to lodgings which they had been friendly enough to prepare for us. It was now the 29th January 1846.

# ANTS

*By*

W. J. BLACKLEDGE

I START without preamble, with an episode that has burned itself into my memory, an incident that nothing but death can efface. I was sweating with fear. Since this is a confession of things experienced during twenty months with the famous Hell's Broth Militia, let me confide the state of my feelings during a typical experience by way of opening.

I did not find it easy to keep my nerve while tied to a stake, and that stake planted firmly on top of an ant-hill, the great red ants swarming up my legs, crawling nearer to the more vulnerable parts of my person.

The yelling natives who danced around me were, of course, offering me the usual bogey-bogey stuff; and while their mad antics did not make a great impression upon me, they hardly helped towards steadiness of nerves. I knew my East. I had had experience enough to realise there was a way out of even this desperate plight. But all my reassuring thoughts could not stop the cold sweat pouring.

These insane devils were intent upon making me squirm. Tying a white man to a stake on an ant-hill so that millions of red ants might get busy nipping the sense out of him—well, that was their queer idea of entertainment. Amusement seems to be largely a matter of geography. In the United States it is all-in wrestling, or some other fashion of the moment. In Europe the making or unmaking of war. In the less civilised parts of the East, slow torture.

I know of no kind so slow and terrifying as this. It is not new in the East. It is as old and cruel as the Himalayas. For the first hour or so I had been able to stand it with a fair show of nonchalance. There was a sickening irritation as the crawling things began to nip, a shivering and a flesh-creeping in

spite of all one's efforts to remain stolid. The irritations increased slowly, insidiously. The crawling hordes were advancing. I found myself thrusting with the surface muscles, tightening and relaxing the flesh, as a horse will against the persistent flies. The muscular actions were involuntary. I could not stop them.

I had been stripped of all clothing. Wherever the myriads of red devils advanced, nipping, stinging, piercing, I shivered and shook in spite of myself. I stared straight ahead, not daring to look down upon limbs fast turning crimson as the massed army of ants surged upwards. Their progress was damnably slow. They would crowd an area of flesh. . . . Others climbed over them . . . inching their way upwards. I did not mind about my limbs so much. They would heal. I was suddenly concerned about my face, and more especially about my sight. . . .

The more they advanced, the more the natives yelled and danced about me—women as well as men. It seemed that the whole of that tiny village hidden away in the mountains had assembled to watch the performance, to shriek with glee as the sahib was tortured until he cried out for mercy or went utterly berserk.

I had made up my mind about that. They would get no humiliating appeal out of me. The mental torture would not get control if I'd just keep my eyes staring straight ahead and my mind from dwelling on the possibilities of these millions of little butchers. Incredible the thousands of spots on one's person that can be pricked and bitten at one and the same time. Again and again I dragged my thoughts and my mind from these one hundred thousand irritations. Hands, arms, the surfaces long exposed to India's merciless sun, these were not so easily affected. But the soft and tender parts that had always had the protection of clothing. . . .

And all the while the men and women danced, shrieked with crazy laughter, tried to attract my attention with actions and remarks so obscene that they cannot be repeated. Seated on a raised dais about fifty yards away was Be-akle Lenhai, the Mad Fakir, the demented devil responsible for my horrible predicament. He was rocking, hugging himself with mirth—if mirth there be in such a ferocious and twisted mentality. He it was who had started all this trouble on the North-West Frontier of India.

He was well-named. Be-akle means witless. He was the maddest thing this side of Gehenna. He was waging a holy

war. His native magic had brought the most fierce of the Mohammedans to his biddings. His avowed object was to raise by fire and sword the new Moslem Empire. He was no religious mendicant subsisting on alms. He took. Men gathered to his aid as he advanced across the mountainous No Man's Land that lies between Afghanistan and the North-West Frontier. He pronounced terrible curses on all who attempted to thwart him, his favourite being—"May you perish by fire!" He had advanced along a trail of burning villages, wrecking, plundering, violating.

He was the wild fanatic who was to descend from High Asia down upon the plains of India and sweep away the white infidels. Once across this No Man's Land and he would head a gigantic wave of turbulent tribes down through the thirty miles of rocky defile that is the Khyber Pass, and so on to India. If he were not checked. And checked he had been, on several occasions—driven back into his mountain fastnesses by the one force he dreaded: "Hell's Broth Militia."

I was the first of the leaders of this force to come into his hands. With such a man, such a situation, anything might ensue. I knew that when the little red devils had done their damndest, when I had reached the state of being unable to register anything further for the amusement of Lenhai and his mob, he would start the fire at my ankles. "May you perish by fire!"

I stared at the ragged beard tinged with red henna. How appropriate, I thought. Red ants! Fire! I must keep a tight hold on myself. This would never do. But it was difficult. I should start to laugh and blubber if I let these gnawing itchings get the better of me. Be-akle's eyes were glistening. Sometimes there was a piercing intensity. Other times an obscure observation of the beyond. Or was it my mental state? I can vouch for the fellow's magnetism, at all events. Immense stature. The frame of an ox.

Mad he undoubtedly was. Otherwise he would have been dead long ago. The Moslems the world over, and more so in that wild region, respect the brother whose mind is deranged. To them such an affliction comes straight from the directing hand of Allah himself. Such a man will always command an audience. Such an one is capable of anything.

There was some method in his madness. It was the hot season of the year, the time of the year when fighting is the only industry in the wild regions beyond the Pass. Until the autumn came round there would be no further scratching at

the soil by these warlike tribes. So the Mad Fakir, with the lust for blood gone to his head, was gathering an ever-increasing army of Waziris, Mahsuds, the Madda Khel, the Zadrians of Khost, and all the rest of the rag-tag and bob-tail of racial tribes.

And all that stood between him and the northern mouth of the Khyber Pass was Hell's Broth Militia. True, he would meet the regular British Indian troops if he reached the Pass ; but it was our job to prevent him and all his kind from trekking down to that gateway.

If only I could get one hand free ! Just to scratch at these nipping devils ! My eyes smarted with the irritations. Tears mingled with the sweat. I was not blubbering. It was as if some strong irritant had reached them so that the tear ducts burst. But damnably humiliating just the same.

And then, as I continued staring straight ahead, desperately trying to keep my mind off the gnawing red ants, a woman walked into my line of vision. She was different. She was without veil. These folk of the hills, it should be understood, are not Indians. Many of them, though sunburnt, are as fair-skinned as the people of the West. But this was no woman of the hills. Nor was she an Indian. What was she doing in this God-forsaken spot ?

She had taken her stand by Lenhai's side, staring curiously at me as if I were some new anthropological body brought forth for her inspection. The thoroughbred woman of the hills has remarkable eyes—eyes of a sapphire blue that distinguish her from the pure Indian type. But the eyes of this woman were purple-black, her face a pale oval with darker shades about the eyes and the soft column of throat. Her *burka*, or cloak, had fallen back, revealing the black hair plastered down the sides of her small head Madonna fashion. For the rest, she was dressed like the hill women—a three-quarter length, tight-fitting jacket of green velvet, baggy trousers of scarlet silk tight round the ankles, and voluminous cloak.

By the side of the towering Lenhai, she looked slim, slight, small-boned—but there was the devil in her smouldering black eyes. She neither laughed nor yelled but stood at gaze, talking quietly to the Mad Fakir. She was so striking that for several minutes her presence forced itself through my absorption with the biting ants. But I soon realised it was no good looking to her for help. She may not have been one of these crazy hill people. She may not become excited at the spectacle of my

ant-ridden body. Except for her eyes, she appeared utterly nonchalant.

Who was this mystery woman? Was she the power behind the throne of Lenhai?

Would it be of any use yelling to her? It was a forlorn hope. But my whole body was creeping and shaking by this time. I was ready to grasp at any frail straw. I guess I was in a pretty desperate state. And there'd be some distraction from my gnawing agony in bawling at this cold, indifferent creature with the smouldering eyes. I yelled at the top of my voice, shrieked so loudly that I was heard above the din and racket of the dancing hill folk. I shouted not in an appeal but in hot anger:

"You are no Moslem woman of the Hills! Does it please you to watch while I am humiliated, bitten alive!"

I shouted in English. Most of the mob, who knew only their native *pushtu*, did not understand. At all events it had the effect of checking the wild orgy. They stopped and stared towards the woman whom I had addressed in the tongue of the *ferungi*—the language of the people beyond the Pass and over the seas.

As for the woman, she stared coldly, suggestion of a smile curving her thin lips. There was a weird silence for several seconds. The people continued to stare at her, expectantly. It was as if they looked to her for guidance. In that sudden cessation of noise the gnawing of the thousands of red ants was intensified a thousand and a thousand times. Involuntarily I squirmed. Sweat dropped from every pore even as the little red devils bit and bored. For now they had reached my neck and I was shaking my head to keep them down—so like an animal with the persistent flies!

My actions raised a laugh, a laugh that spread into an uproar. I suppose I did look funny, screamingly funny, jerking my head about like an infuriated horse!

They were at the corners of my mouth—where the saliva frothed. I, too, was biting. I was biting and spitting and making all manner of facial contortions to rid my face of the creeping insects. I knew that if they got to my eyes I should be reduced to gibbering terror. And that would be one real triumph for these guffawing swine.

But one thing I noticed through all this increasing agony and horror. The mystery woman was talking earnestly to the Mad Fakir. Was she interceding on my behalf? I prayed as they talked. I prayed as I fought against the creeping red



army that now threatened to choke me, blind me. They were filling my nostrils—no matter how hard I exhaled. A sickening terror engulfed me. I spewed violently. I should have gone right out then, I guess, had not some one come along with a heavy broom of twigs and started to sweep the filthy creatures from my body.

That broom was harsh and incredibly rough against my flesh, but it was a heaven-sent relief to me. It was jabbed ruthlessly about my head and neck and shoulders. It was swept over me from head to foot in no gentle manner. But it was effective. The relief, the reaction was so intense that I very nearly fainted.

Then the cords were cut and I was dragged clear of the ant-hill. I began to put on my clothes. Armed Pathans stood by. The woman was watching from a few yards distant. Her face was expressionless—except for the smouldering eyes.

"I couldn't begin to express my thanks . . ." I began.

"Don't trouble," said she. "There may be worse to come."

As I was led away I wondered greatly just what she meant. She spoke in English with an accent that had nothing to do with the "Free Land of the Hills," nor with India beyond the Pass. That set me puzzling. Where had I heard that peculiar accent before? This was no native of the East. At all events, she had power, the power to set me free from that disgustingly filthy torture. She had given me a breathing space.

The ants had left their mark—or marks. It was like a terrific intensification of prickly heat. I itched to claw at a hundred places at once. Nevertheless, I was suddenly filled with hope, optimistic enough to believe that I still had a chance, that I might even make a getaway!

Every village in the hill country is walled and fortified. There are incessant feuds among the clans which make such precautions necessary. At any rate, the feuds were constant until the Mad Fakir came along to unite the clans in holy war against the infidels. But the fortifications remained. One would need to be something of a magician to get clear of these walls, seven feet thick, and which were patrolled night and day by hillmen armed to the teeth.

I lay in my stone cell and pondered these things. The walls of my prison were of solid stone, like most of the buildings in these villages—for the country was just one gigantic mass of rocks and stones. The only opening besides the door was a circular one high up in the wall. It did not look big enough

for me to worm my way through. I am fairly heavily built and top all of five feet ten. The only piece of furniture in the room was a *charpoy*, a bed made of a wooden frame with cord laced across after the manner of a spring mattress. I up-ended this by the wall. It put me six feet up the wall, but even then I could only just get my head to the aperture.

The light was still good. I could see across the courtyard of this cluster of buildings. Beyond was the village proper. The natives were back at their daily tasks. A camel caravan had arrived, and there was much bartering and trading in the bazaar. It all looked peaceful and happy enough. Veiled and heavily-cloaked women, with gaily-trousered legs, shuffled through the dust of the highways and byways. Stalwart and muscular Pathans, many of them over six feet tall, strode hither and yon. They went about their peaceful occupations heavily armed. It was a habit with the hillmen. They and their forbears had lived that way for centuries—always ready for a fighting feud.

I measured the loophole. It was just possible that I could squeeze through. There were armed men patrolling beneath. At sunset they would bow their heads to the dust in supplication to Allah, for the Moslem faith was very strong in these folk. I decided that when the hour of prayer came I should take a chance. I must not let this night go by without trying. God knows what was awaiting me on the morrow. I was not afraid of death. Indeed I preferred it to the frightful tortures that these fanatics of the hills could inflict.

With the setting of the sun, however, my chances of escape dwindled considerably. For the great door was suddenly thrust open, and the strange woman who had been responsible for my release from the ant-hill entered. She locked the door behind her then sat down beside me on the *charpoy*. I was too taken aback to speak. We stared at each other for several seconds. The creature's face was as expressionless as that of a Chinese. Only her eyes were alive.

"Digger Craven," she said, "you want to get back to your company of killers, don't you? Even now you are planning ways and means of escape?"

"Where did you get hold of my nickname?"

"Never mind that. Would you like to walk out of this village a free man?"

"That hardly needs answering. Who are you?"

"Mahrila is my name. That is all you may know. In exchange for a little information you will be escorted to

within safe distance of your camp. Lenhai has promised that."

"What on earth is there that I can tell you?"

She very soon made herself clear. Apparently there was quite a lot I could tell—the strength of my company of irregulars, the numbers and dispositions of the garrisons along the Khyber Pass, the recent movements of troops on the Frontier, and strength and type of arms, the secret of the ammunition dumps, the strength of the new flying unit, and what exactly was this automatic gun that had recently appeared at the Frontier posts?

All of which was very interesting. Only a magician or the G.O.C. could answer such questions. And so I told her. She was convinced I was feigning ignorance of the military situation. Even if I could not supply all the information she sought—surely there was much that I knew? Just how much? Wasn't it worth imparting in exchange for my life? Or did I prefer a slow, tortuous death? I protested—and wondered where the devil I had heard that accent before. It wasn't French, nor German, nor Italian. . . .

"What are you doing in the Pathan country, Mahrila?"

"I belong to this country."

"That's just a cheap lie."

She shrugged, repeated her offer.

"You don't belong to this land. You are not a Moslem—or you would be at prayers now."

"What does it matter who I am? I'm offering you release in return for a little information. Are you going to prove yourself as big a fool as you looked on the ant-hill?"

I wriggled. A thousand sores were pricking.

"What do you suppose I got you out of that plight for? Merely because you are a white man? T'cha! I want these few facts. You can give them. Stop playing the fool. Lenhai has less patience than I."

"I am not a staff officer. I know nothing of these things."

I tried to be patient, but I could see she did not believe me.

"If you think I am being terribly heroic, you're all wrong. I tell you I don't know."

"But you are an officer of the Kurram Militia. You must know something of these things."

And so it went on, a battle of wits, for the better part of an hour. The wench had a bee in her bonnet, and it was very nearly as big as the beetle in Be-akle Lenhai's turban. I'd known that these folk of the hills were crazy about their

religious ideals, but I had never realised just how crazy they could be until I fell into their hands.

"You came here secretly with your native servant. Why?"

"You know why," I snapped, scratching at the infuriating heat spots. "I came to find out just what Lenhai was doing with this clan. The fellow has become a dangerous menace, not merely to the Frontier, but to India as well. He has caused more murder and bloodshed and terror among the tribes——"

"You're just a spy!"

"Don't be theatrical. I mistook you for an intelligent woman. I am doing a job of work, as an officer. You know what the Kurram Militia is. We are policing these parts. Lenhai is wrecking the countryside. He's got to be stopped. Now be sensible and show me how I can get out of this fort."

"On condition that you give me what I ask for!"

"For heaven's sake, woman! I haven't any information to give. What are you doing in this galley? Don't you realise that if Lenhai is allowed to carry on he might well start an ugly war?"

"But of course. That is what he intends. And once his plans are complete, all the armies of the British on the Frontier will not stop him."

She did not, I thought, possess those eerie-looking orbs for nothing. Probably she was just as mentally deranged as the Mad Fakir himself. Certainly she looked capable of anything. But what possible interest could she have in this Moslem's holy war? She was not of the Faith. Yet she was accepted by these people. Suddenly she swung round, stared hard with her smouldering eyes.

"If what you say is true, you are of no use to us. Why should I not kill you now?"

"What good would that do? And what d'you suppose I should be doing while you are using that knife of yours? That pretty neck shouldn't be difficult to twist. The advantage would be mine—since you are between me and the door."

"Maybe Lenhai will persuade you to talk to-morrow."

She jumped to her feet and went hurriedly out of the cell, crashing the door behind her. Apparently she had suddenly lost interest in me. Perhaps she had just realised her danger—alone in this cell with a desperate man, whose thousands of irritating sores made it extremely difficult for him to keep a level head. I have no doubt that my ferocious bites were responsible for much of my reckless behaviour from then on.

I had missed the opportunity of making a getaway while the guards were at prayer.

And now darkness had descended, but the light from a torch in the courtyard illumined my prison sufficiently for me to set to work. Once more I up-ended the *charpoy* and climbed up to the opening in the wall. I made a cautious survey. There were two guards patrolling beneath, typical of their clan, muscular giants armed to the teeth. The situation looked perfectly hopeless. Maybe if it had not been for the ghastly sores gnawing at me from head to foot I should not have made the attempt. But my condition was such that I would have welcomed death—rather than sit still in that stifling cell with nothing to do but dwell on a lacerated flesh and scratch. . . .

I moved round gingerly on my perilous perch. The drop would be about ten feet—a mere trifle. Out I went, feet first, lowering myself slowly. I hung by finger-tips for breathless seconds—then dropped. There I lay panting. It was a lovely getaway—so far! I'd hardly made a sound. A dozen yards away the two guards stood chatting. A murmur of sound came from beyond the courtyard wall. I sat crouched in the shadow of what had been my prison only a few moments ago and thought hard. If I could cross the yard and scale the wall, I'd have more than a sporting chance.

It could be done, providing I crept round the walls and kept out of the beam of light thrown by the torch. I began inching my way through the shadows. I was then as cunning as any hillman. It seemed that I crawled for hours, pausing frequently to make sure I was not discovered. Reaching an angle of the prison wall, I sat and rested for a while. I was then out of sight of the guards. They seemed to be satisfied to patrol within a few yards of the cell door.

I was appreciably nearer the *outer* wall of the fort, a matter of half a dozen yards. Child's play, thought I, and chuckled softly. Looking back on the affair, I now know that mentally I was more than a trifle sub-normal, otherwise I could not have made the grade.

Clearing the intervening space, I crouched under the courtyard wall. It was all of ten feet high and spiked. Still the two guards patrolled up and down, blissfully ignorant of the fact that I was no longer in that cell. I slipped off my belt, threw it over a spike, began to haul myself up. A shot rang out. It whistled close to my ear, flattened itself against the wall. There was a yelling and scampering of feet. Hot lead



*There were two guards patrolling beneath, armed to the teeth.*



spattered around me as I struggled to scale the wall, tearing my legs on the spikes. Something pierced my arm like a sizzling hot needle. Stopped one? But I was over and had tumbled to the ground in a heap before my shouting pursuers had reached the wall.

The shoulder burned and ached intolerably, adding to the general soreness and irritation of the ant bites. There was no time to heed such things. The bawling of angry and excited men was too close. The shadows of night, however, were all in my favour. The village, like all habitations of these mountain regions, had no street lighting. A few torches lit up the bazaar quarter. I gave it a wide berth. The tortuous alleys afforded plenty of cover. I slunk along the shadows of the mean little streets.

Soon the whole place was roused. Men and women were racing about in all directions. Their voices proclaimed the fact that the *ferungi* had escaped and was hiding somewhere in the village. I was in a spot. The village wall, seven or eight feet thick, would be crawling with snipers. No man went around these fortified habitations of the mountains unarmed, unless he were very old.

I flattened against the wall of a house as a great giant of a fellow came tearing round the corner. He pulled up sharply. I lifted my foot to his shin. We went down together. A decision of split seconds. I had to keep this hulking brute quiet. That was the essential thing. My elbow was under his chin. I worked like a madman, pounding a vulnerable spot. He beat the dust with his one free arm, tried to wrap his legs around me for the throw. But I had his gun and was using the butt to smash him into silence.

The next moment I felt myself lifted in the air. I came down with a crash, hitting my jaw against the butt of the gun, struggled clumsily for several minutes, trying to regain my breath. Like all hillmen, the fellow possessed amazing strength. He continued to throw me about, even though his face was a bleeding pulp and his jaw broken. I bent back one of his arms, further and further, heard the sickening crack.

Still we fought on, scrabbling and rolling in the dust. At all events, he had had no opportunity to shout and thus warn others of my presence. In those inflamed minutes I fought with death in mind, not knowing, not caring whether this were the end. My thumb broke on the leathery texture of his neck. I can see now the foaming mouth, the twisted jowl dripping blood, and the icy glare in his eyes. While I laboured and



panted, the sweat poured, salting excruciatingly the ant-bitten sores. I was sick with the intolerable throbbing and gnawing of the bullet wound. But, somehow, I fought on, feeling that only this brute and his incredible strength stood between me and freedom.

These men of the hills are totally different from the Indians, bigger even than the average Arabian. Rarely does one come upon a Pathan less than six feet in height. They are heavy and muscular, with an enormous spread of shoulders. And though they are like the rest of their Eastern brothers in that they know hardly anything about the use of fists, these hillmen are adept in a certain kind of native wrestling.

That I discovered to my cost when I fought with the hillman in the dimness of that grimy alley. Once his champing jaw closed over my jugular vein. But he could not grip. His jaw was broken. He gasped with the pain of the effort. I was sticky with blood—my adversary's as well as my own. We both became pretty well spent, pawing stupidly, clutching less and less firmly. I dared not leave him while he showed any fight at all. God! How beastly it all was! I trembled with rage because I had not the strength to lift the gun again and finish him. I lay on him, the dead weight of my body slumped over him in exhaustion. Just how long I remained there, why we were never discovered, I cannot say. I was dimly aware that the night was advancing, the cries of the searchers, the scurrying of feet, the hullabaloo of a maddened populace deprived of its prey—grew gradually fainter, died away.

And now I was in greater peril than ever. I realised the urgency of getting to my feet, getting on my way, before the dawn came up. But I could not rise. Hours passed while I lay crumpled over that stinking carcass, precious hours; and I hadn't the wit to stagger to my feet. I could have cried with the bitter impotence of the situation. Must I give in, after all the effort I'd made? Again and again I tried, crawled a few inches, dragging along by the wall, slumping there to regain breath. The Pathan lay still. I stared at the figure Dead? I never knew. Nor cared.

Up on my feet by the wall, panting like a wounded stone crusher. Mine a livery of ineptitude. Helpless. Hopeless. Then a staggering sort of run—only to pitch headlong into the dust. Whither? I had not the foggiest notion. Did not know whether my direction was towards the village wall. I was the craziest sort of jogtrot. Up and down, careering like one drugged with hashish, with one idea fixed firmly in my mind—

keep moving, keep moving. Had I gone forth with all my faculties fully alive I should probably have stumbled into some one. I know that figures slunk past me as I lay in the dust. It seemed that fate was on my side in that last desperate effort.

Breath hiccoughing in sobs. A deadening pain up the wounded arm to neck and shoulder. The incessant prickling of a thousand bites. A thumb missing—or was it just dead with numbness? Things to remember whenever the long, long hours of that ghastly night are recalled.

Other memories, seething and sullen yet vivid, of those darkened streets that wound endlessly, of sudden alarms as I snuggled into the dust, my nose within a few inches of passing feet, gaily slippered feet, familiar silk-trousered legs, heavy sandals of stalwart men, giant Pathans and their womenfolk drifting back to well-guarded homes, scraps of conversation. . . . They seemed pretty certain I could not leave the village, that I'd never get beyond the fortified walls, even in the darkness.

Then silence. The village slept. With the strange quietude that precedes the dawn I was recovering sufficiently to gain some sense of direction. And now I had the gun and cartridge belts of that figure I had left slumped in the dirt. My one desire was to get beyond this village and down into the valley where I might find a cave. Then sleep. Heavens! How I longed for sleep!

The wall. Figures patrolling. It would be easy enough to reach the top, for there were jutting steps at intervals used by the guards. But how get by these armed patrols? There was one squatting on his haunches immediately above, his back towards me, staring out into the blackness. If I brained him with the gun, how long would it be before he was discovered and I followed? I was in no case to out-distance a fit man. To walk was painful enough.

I had the solution of that difficulty. He must not be discovered. I crept, taking the jutting stones slowly and painfully.

When one's life depends on every little move. . . . I reached the topmost step, my chin over the rim of the wall. On the right and left flanks dim figures moved restlessly, heard rather than seen. But the squatting figure little more than a yard away never moved. It was too much to hope that he would be asleep. I squatted too, resting for the effort, reserving the remnants of energy left in my wearied muscles.

An unforgettable moment. I crept again, inching a way

forward, snout of a gun grasped in my hand. The fellow turned a split second too late. The butt crashed. He gave a choking sort of grunt and crumpled up. A swift glance to right and left, then I was dragging him across the top of the wall—a matter of seven or eight feet and no light task, for he was a hefty wallah. I tumbled him over, heard the soft bump of his fall, and flopped over on top of him.

The drop took the breath out of me for a space. But soon I was up, scurrying off at a staggering run, heading blindly into the welcome darkness. Free? But was I? Dawn would soon be up now. There would come search-parties, scouring the countryside. In this land of fantastic hills and black gulleys, however, there were thousands of crevices in which one might hide. Soon I would lie down and sleep in some hideout of the gully. I had to keep on telling myself that. It needed superhuman effort to keep moving just then.

I was still stumbling over the stones when the dawn broke up the black dome of the heavens. The village was a mere smudge away up on the hillside. I knew this gully. It was the one through which a treacherous native servant had led me. I passed the identical cave in which I had lain hidden while my "boy"—every Indian servant is a boy, no matter what his age—had gone off as a decoy to lead the Mad Fakir back to me. But the boy had turned traitor. He not only brought Lenhai to my cave but a score of armed hillmen as well.

The plan was, of course, that the Mad Fakir should be induced to visit me alone, with the pretence that I had brought much valuable information about the sahibs of the Kurram Militia—otherwise "Hell's Broth Militia," as it was so aptly nicknamed. The scheme had flopped horribly. Hence my capture and subsequent torture.

No good dwelling on that now. Probably this cave was the last place they'd look in for me, since I had already been caught there; but I gave it a wide berth just the same. I plodded on, careering crazily along the broken bed of the gully. Now the sun was splashing the heavens with colour. Back in that village the hue and cry would be on. My world of rocks was turning from black to grey. A raging thirst was added to my other aches and pains. There must be something pretty tough about the instinct of self-preservation—otherwise I should have dropped in my tracks long ago.

I kept on, lurching over the broken stones like a sleep-walker. I knew by the sun that my direction was right. There wasn't a sound in that grim valley, except the stubbing of my

clumsy feet against the flints. Then I pitched forward, lay still for a timeless period. Presently I began to crawl. I'd seen a ledge of rock that looked as if it contained water. Water ! God in heaven ! What thirst was this ? It blistered my mouth. It threatened the breathing—as if one were about to choke.

But I made the ledge and I was right. I dragged myself along and lay with my head in the dirty water. The relief was indescribable. I drew in copious draughts of the cooling liquid, splashed it about head and neck. It might have been reeking with germs—probably was—but it was heaven-sent nectar to me ! I lay drinking and bathing while my spirits rose. I could go on again now. I went, treading a rugged path along the hillside with leaden feet. I refused to give in to the creeping sensation of numbness. Arms hung like dead weights so that I hardly knew they were there. Only my legs seemed to move . . . lurching, stumbling, pitching. . . . Then the black-out. . .

I was not conscious of anything for the remainder of that day. I know that I awoke on one occasion and the whole world was dark. Night again, I thought feebly, and wondered just where I had fallen. Maybe I was on some perilous perch of rock. It was impossible to see in that dense blackness. Maybe some little movement would pitch me over on to jagged crags. Anyway, I was too utterly weary to move. The cool stone against the heated lacerations was infinitely soothing. I curled up and went to sleep again.

From then on—a fitful sleeping and dreams. Always when I awoke and opened my eyes the world was black, and for a space terror walked the brain. I fancied I must be blind. Why was it always dark ? It was many hours before I realised that I must have crawled into the inner recess of a cave in the mountain-side. I had begun by groping my way around until I came to the shaft of light. Then I knew. Proceeding cautiously, I came to the mouth, and broad daylight. Whether I had been in that cleft one day or two I could not say. I was considerably refreshed. The flesh wound had crusted over. The broken thumb had swollen to the size of two. The ant-bites were not nearly so troublesome. I'd been a great deal nearer to death. As my brain grew clearer I saw that this was definitely a case for optimism.

I crawled out and gazed up and down the valley. It was a dead world. There was not a sign of life anywhere. So, I had escaped ? How long would it take the company to locate me ? They had not the remotest idea as to the direction the

boy and I were to take. The whole thing was carried out with the utmost secrecy. It was only after much persuasion that the Colonel had permitted me to undertake the job at all. We had not reckoned on the treacherous native boy.

The rank and file of Hell's Broth Militia was composed entirely of natives, also the non-commissioned officers, with only half a dozen sahibs to control them. They were irregulars, many of whom claimed unbroken descent from the warriors who had fought the armies of Alexander the Great, others were just hard-bitten children of a mixed refugee parenthood of Afghans, Mongolians, Afridis, Pathan deserters, and heaven knows what. The force was composed of the worst native elements—cattle thieves, outlaws, bandits, deserters from the clans, and deserters from the Army proper—a strange brotherhood held together by a handful of officers, its chief industry guerilla fighting such as these rascals' forbears had enjoyed for centuries. As ferocious and wild a mob as any border country could muster.

But it was rare that we found a traitor amongst them. The pay and rationing was better than they could get elsewhere, and more important still to natives of such calibre, there was always a scrap in the offing. Once they had adjusted themselves to our apology for discipline they were loyal almost to a man, despite their wildness. I could have staked my reputation on that native boy, for we had been on similar stunts before. Now I could only assume that he had turned traitor, since, having betrayed me to the Mad Fakır and his bodyguard, he had completely disappeared.

I thought hard of these things as I stared up and down that barren gully. How long since I left the camp? More than a week, I judged. Perhaps two. I was conscious of hunger and thirst, and I guess I must have been in that cave two or three days, maybe more. The company might search for weeks in this Free Land of the Hills without ever coming upon me. There were thousands of crannies and clefts in these regions where a man could lose himself. I could hardly hope for help in that direction. There was nothing for it but to make my own way back. If I kept going in a southerly direction I was almost certain to hit a caravan road and maybe a friendly caravan loping towards Peshawar with merchandise from Kabul or Bokhara.

I started out once more, trudging mechanically with a wary eye on the sun. It seemed as if I had the whole world to myself, and it appeared that way for hours. I struck a caravan

trail at long last. It must then have been well past noon. I came upon a water-hole and sat down to refresh myself. I had no intention of falling asleep. But it is fatal for a weary man to sit drowsing in the sun.

I awoke with a jerk and leapt to my feet. Instinctively I struck out at the great hulking hillman who had awakened me. And then I had another guess coming. The fellow grabbed my arms, pinned them helplessly to my sides and held me thus. We stared at each other for long seconds. He looked a typical hillman—six feet of brawn and muscle, heavy, bearded jowl, damnably familiar in his turban, long tight-fitting coat, rough blouse, cummerbund, and baggy breeches. And then the shock of my life, so to speak.

"Now . . . just where in hell did you spring from, buddy?"

This must be another delusion, I told myself. Here was a native of the mountains, every inch of him, clothes, stature, jowl, cartridge belts, guns, knives and all. And he was addressing me in English—English with American idioms and an Irish drawl! No. It couldn't be. Not in the middle of this country of black hills and grey stone. After all I'd gone through. . . . It was just my brain playing tricks on me. . . .

"Say that again," I gasped.

He grinned, showing two rows of even white teeth, big teeth, big like himself, big like tombstones in the black scrub of beard. He repeated the words, realising perhaps from my torn and ragged apology for a uniform that I'd been in some tough spot, repeated them slowly and carefully, his grey eyes twinkling.

"It's a long story. It cannot be told to any stranger who happens along. I'm trying to make my way back to the Kurram Militia cantonment. What excites me is just where *you* sprang from?"

"That's simple enough," the stranger laughed. "I'm trekking from Afghanistan to India. Been visiting Kabul. Which accounts for the native clobber I'm wearing. That's my caravan over there."

I swung round, stared hard. There, not fifty yards away, was a camel caravan replete with camelteers, baggage, waterskins, and all the usual paraphernalia of this ancient type of transport. Funny. I'd been too sound asleep to hear it approach, and too startled and excited at the encounter with this mysterious Irish-American to notice it after I had been so rudely awakened. I started laughing like an hysterical schoolgirl.

# ADVENTURES WITH BALLOONS

By

H. K. HALES

*This is an episode out of the life of a man who, born in 1868, saw the rapid advance of science—especially in the science of locomotion. Here, he is exploring the possibilities of aviation.*

JUST as I graduated through the various stages of land travel from the old boneshaker to the modern car, so I progressed in the air. The history of flying, I find, is very little understood, and youngsters who watch the great air liners of to-day rarely realise that thirty years ago to leave the ground at all was considered bordering on the miraculous.

For many years my thoughts kept turning to the air. I had seen the motor-car conquer derision, and I was sure that the aeroplane would be the same. I read of the experiments of the brothers Wright and demanded continually why no one in England was following their lead.

I was a Midland counties cycle, piano, and motor dealer, with no money to spend on experiments, but I determined to have some part in the flying game. It was in this spirit that I attended Hanley Park Fêtes in July 1904.

Every one knows what "Park Fêtes" are like. Hanley Park Fêtes were just like all the others—fireworks, flower show, roundabouts, horse leaping, and all the fun of the fair. But that year there was something new. Captain Spencer, the famous aeronaut, had arrived in his airship.

I had intended to examine the mechanism closely and to question Captain Spencer on the problems of flight—particularly with reference to the aeroplane which was coming more and more into the news. There was no thought in my mind of making a flight. I did not think that that would be possible. I found, however, to my astonishment, that instead of being

one of a host of eager applicants for permission to accompany the Captain on his demonstration, I was the only person in the whole crowd who was willing to pay for the privilege of risking his neck. I believe that I am entitled to claim that I was the first paying passenger by airship in Great Britain who went any distance and rose to 1000 feet.

Though the airship looked very easy and safe on the ground, I looked at it with the eye of a mechanic, and was amazed at the flimsy nature of its construction. Nevertheless I was determined to go. I was "The Card"—and "The Card" had to be first in any enterprise, no matter how mad. It was privately arranged that Mr. H. K. Hales would accompany the aeronaut on a circular route covering fifty miles.

The airship did not depart for some considerable time. Indeed, it seemed that it would never be able to take the air. The sail-like rudder was being fixed to the framework when suddenly there was an ominous crack, and it was found that one of the bamboo cross-pieces supporting the "sail" had buckled up and split. The damage was repaired by Captain Spencer, and the split bamboo was bound together and strengthened with other lengths of the same material. Shortly after eight o'clock on that summer evening all was complete. The airship, properly ballasted, was ready to rise. Captain Spencer climbed into the cockpit and to the amazement of the large crowd of 30,000 I followed him. I was not nervous—far from it—for I knew that I had my special Providence with me, and it had never let me down yet. At half-past eight we were off. My friend with whom I had gone to the fair ran off to get one of my cars as he intended to follow the ship by road. A reporter begged me to give him any instructions as to the disposal of my worldly goods, and with his voice echoing in my ears I left Mother Earth for the first time.

"Start her up!" shouted Captain Spencer, and to a tumult of shouts and a scattering of the crowd we were off and away.

I had long dreamed of flight into the air, and it had always been one of my cherished ambitions, and now that it was mine I was fairly thrilled. Below me stretched the crowd and the roofs of houses like little child's toys. I sat there in the basket and, believe me, the one thought in my mind was that I must tread lightly, for I had no wish to slip through the bottom. The airship was engined by a six-horse-power motor. Think of it! Six horse-power, and not very good horses at that if I knew motors! Heaven help us if a strong



wind arose. The engine would be useless to drive us against it.

We were soon travelling along comfortably, and the novelty was wearing off. I was gazing down at the passing landscape lovely in the setting sun when suddenly Spencer spoke to me: "Mr. Hales," he said, "would you like to navigate her yourself?" I jumped at the chance—it was the very height of my ambition. I took firm hold of the wheel and by following Captain Spencer's instructions carefully I gradually found that I had the airship as much under control as my favourite motor-car. First circling to the left and then to the right we flew like some gigantic bird over the peaceful countryside. Soon we headed into the wind and the little motor propelled us along; slowly, it is true, but still we did progress.

Then we circled round once more till the wind was behind us, and now we fairly flew. Soon the Captain left me to my own devices, and I piloted the airship absolutely on my own.

"It's very difficult to judge your height," he said. "We'd better throw out a line." Many years later, travelling in an Imperial Airways liner with a great cluster of dials, I remembered that on my first flight our only altimeter was a weighted cord. It was just like taking soundings in the sea. True, we had an aneroid barometer which gave fairly accurate height readings when you were well up. But near the ground it was useless. And it was naturally at low heights that the question of altitude was most important. Hence the line.

South by east we travelled, the lilac evening creeping all around us.

"That's Blyth Bridge," I said. "What height are we now?"

"Three thousand feet," said Spencer. "Time we were getting down."

"What's that place there?" I asked.

"There's Leigh," he said, "—and farther on, Cresswell. Stand by. I'm going to pull the cord."

As he spoke he switched off the motor, and I shall never forget that moment as long as I live. Mine had been a noisy life. I had never realised what utter peace could be like. Now as we drifted through the stillness of the dusk there was not one single sound. Even the canvas and the ropes were still. Silence was absolute . . . terrific. We seemed to be lost in a sea of quiet.

A touch to the cord and our descent began, a long, luxurious glide, with the earth floating up as if in welcome.

"Be ready with those grappling irons," said the Captain at last.

I awoke with a start to face reality. It seemed much darker, and the earth was very near.

"Here are some hayfields," said the Captain. "Down we go."

So down we went—and dropped right into the arms of a stiff night breeze that was scurrying along the tree-tops. Our speed at once increased dangerously as we skimmed over hedges and trees. It was no longer a question of a gentle glide. Disaster seemed close at hand.

"Let go," shouted the intrepid Spencer. "Over with that grappling iron!"

It took every ounce of my strength, but I managed to sling our anchor overboard from that crazily tilting basket without slinging myself after it. Hanging on like grim death I gazed anxiously down to where the huge grapple bumped in great leaps over the fields, for it had nothing on which it could lay hold. I was still staring down, fascinated by these huge leaps of the anchor, when I felt my coat collar clutched and the Captain pulled me down violently into the bottom of the basket. I had not looked in the direction in which we were travelling, nor had I realised our peril. No sooner were we crouched below the basket's rim than with a resounding crash we collided with the branches of a large oak tree, the partially deflated balloon fluttering lamely above us. Below was the ground—a good thirty feet away. For a few moments we remained stationary. Then came another terrible crack and I felt myself upside down, head over heels, holding on for dear life.

Just where I was I could not tell, but there was a huge weight on my head and I struggled to free myself. My hand encountered the lower regions of Captain Spencer's anatomy and I realised that he was sitting on my head. On my stomach lay two or three sandbags and my legs were doubled under me. One thought swept through my mind in these seconds. Not a prayer, not a curse, but simply a query. My special Providence would have its work cut out to get me clear of this. I wondered what it would do about it.

The airship had broken in two, and we were hanging suspended in midair, held only by the cords which secured the basket to the balloon.

"Hold tight—don't move a muscle," yelled Spencer. Not that I was likely to. I couldn't move a limb, what with

his weight, and the weight of the sandbags pressing solidly upon me.

In a few moments Spencer slowly and carefully climbed to his feet and freed me from the tangle. By this time some farm labourers had hurried to the tree and, acting under his instructions, they gently pulled the car inch by inch until we were about fifteen feet from the ground.

"Come on, old chap," said the nonchalant Spencer. "Hurry up and climb down before things crack any more."

Very, very carefully I felt my way down to safety. Believe me, the land felt extremely good and solid under my feet. Captain Spencer followed me, and when he arrived we solemnly shook hands.

Then I turned to the nearest labourer and asked him where we were. His reply was not illuminating. "Thee're in t' middle o' noweere." At first I believed him, but later found that we were not far from Cresswell. It took us three hours' hard work to pack that airship up and stuff it into a hay-cart. Thus we journeyed back to Hanley. It was early dawn before my friend with the car found me. He had given me up for lost. It was not a triumphant return, but I did not mind for myself. I had not only made a flight, but I had actually piloted an airship for more than thirty miles. To-day in my cabinet are three brown leaves, arranged neatly. They have withered a little since they grew on that oak tree in 1904, but I keep them. The power that grew those leaves on that oak tree guided me to safety. I keep them to remind me of that.

Three years later, almost to the day, I made three ascents in a balloon on consecutive days. The first was from Hanley to Manchester. I remember that with two companions I entered the refreshment bar in London Road Station at Manchester and asked for something to eat. They offered us sandwiches, but we wanted something better than that. "We have come too far for sandwiches to be any use," I remarked, and when inquiries drew from us that we had not come from the north by the express or from the east by the local or from west or south by any other train, but had arrived from the air almost on the roof of the restaurant, we were served with something befitting the occasion.

We had commenced the ascent at the annual fête at Hanley, the scene of my earlier adventure. Taking a north-easterly direction, we passed over Burslem, over Mow Cop, and later over Congleton and Macclesfield. As we sailed over this town the clocks struck three. Soon after passing Congleton

we rose rapidly and, travelling briskly, were soon over Stockport. Over Belle Vue our height was one thousand feet. Soon we were drifting over the factories of Manchester, and slowly descended upon a maelstrom of railway lines and low roofs. As we passed over these at a low altitude our trailer rope twisted and turned like a live thing as it encircled first one chimney stack and then another. Terrific jerks at the car resulted as each obstacle was encountered, and it seemed that at any moment we should be pitched out of our frail little basket. We skimmed over a corrugated-iron fence and the rope caught in it. For a moment we ceased our mad journey, but with a tearing sound the fence gave way and we passed on, leaving a trail of broken fencing behind us. We were now very low, and I remember that my companions were very worried. I was trying to cheer them up when I saw an old lady in her garden looking at us. I shouted: "Get the kettle on, Mother, we're dropping in for tea." The roofs were just cleared but the next obstacle was some telegraph wires. Here the rope caught tight and broke down three or four of them. A quick lurch followed and we found ourselves on the ground surrounded by mill-hands. These men pounced on the balloon and held it down while we scrambled out. By the side of us was a large reservoir, so we were lucky to have stopped where we did. Had we travelled a few feet farther, the chances were we should have been drowned.

My second flight was a short one. Once again I was with Captain Spencer. We travelled as far as Biddulph without incident, and returned the same evening to Hanley.

But the third trip was more interesting. At 11.30 on Friday morning we entered the basket of the larger of Spencer's two balloons—capacity, 45,000 cubic feet. Soon we left the Potteries behind us. On we went over the Derbyshire Hills. Leek was passed at twelve o'clock, but then rain came on suddenly and forced us down.

"Stand by to throw ballast," yelled Spencer.

I stood ready for his orders, and at the word of command heaved the sandbags over the side. We had almost touched the ground, but a splintering of wood was the only sound of damage. As I looked over the side of the basket I saw that the top rails of a wooden gate had been carried away. We soon cleared the crest of the hills and were once again 4000 feet above the ground. Chatsworth House lay below us, encircled by its lovely trees. We munched our sandwiches.

Chesterfield passed by . . . and still we drove on to the north-east. The atmosphere had become much cooler and we now dropped first to 1000, then to 600, and finally down to 300 feet. The trailer rope was dragging on the ground. Obviously something had to be done, and done quickly. Another bag of ballast was heaved overboard. Just as I dropped the bag overboard, the trailer rope started to play around the glass roofs of a large hothouse building. Playfully it flickered about the large panes and finally it knocked in several of them, then proceeding on its way as though with glee. It was like a live thing, rejoicing at the damage it had done. The next encounter was with some fowls in a yard. A few Buff Orpingtons came off much the worse for the encounter, and tail feathers followed the trailer in a cloud as it jumped the wall with a huge bound.

We had parted with bag after bag of ballast and were now approaching Sheffield. A thick pall of smoke lay to the north-east of us, coming ominously nearer as we rapidly travelled towards the city of steel, but the sun had come out again and was beating down on the huge envelope so that the gas was expanding and stretching the casing to its limits.

I glanced at the barometer . . . 8500 feet. It had been an ambition of mine to reach 10,000 feet and we were still two thousand feet from my objective. Something must be done about it. We reached 8750, and finally 9000 feet. All eyes were fixed on the aneroid barometer suspended from one of the ropes which held the basket to the envelope. That little instrument was the only guide to our movements. We were so high up that we seemed to be stationary, judged by the land beneath us. We were now approaching a large bank of clouds. Swiftly and silently, they enveloped us. In a few moments we lost sight of the earth and were lost in a filmy mist. We watched the little instrument and saw the needle creep round—9200 . . . and then 9500 feet. All at once came a glimpse of blue sky and then again we were into another bank of clouds. Once through these we came out suddenly into the wonderful sunlight of the upper air and saw stainless blue skies above us. Below was a carpet of white mist and surrounding us great mountains of cumulus white, limiting our horizon. Even I had forgotten the barometer. It was an awe-inspiring experience. We seemed to hang absolutely stationary, held as though by an invisible thread from the sun above us, poised in the eternal ether, 10,000 feet above the earth.

Captain Spencer turned to me. "Well, Mr. Hales, are you satisfied at last?"

As he spoke a gap appeared in the clouds beneath us, and through that gap, as through the wrong end of a telescope, we saw the earth far, far down below us, such an infinitesimal fragment it seemed that it was difficult to realise that we could see some twenty miles of country through our chink in the clouds.

Soon after this we reached our highest altitude—11,100 feet, more than two miles above the earth. Queerly enough I had not given a thought till now to that long drop below. Perhaps it was that vision of the earth through the gap in the clouds that did it—but whatever the reason, I looked up at the glistening bag above me and realised with a throb of fear that we had only that thin, oh! so very thin, silken tissue between us and the end.

"Let's go down, Spencer. I am satisfied," I remarked.

Spencer pulled a cord and I felt a rush of cold air as we rapidly descended. Down, down, down, into the clouds once more. . . . Soon what had been our floor became our roof. Below us gleamed the river Trent, to the north lay the Humber estuary, plainly visible.

Heaving over another bag of ballast did not seem to check our descent appreciably and we still continued our headlong downward career. I noticed that even Spencer looked anxious.

"Now listen carefully," he said, and gave us directions as to what we must do immediately we hit the ground. I had always longed for thrills, but now I was not sure that I wanted any more. Gone was that feeling of suspension and immobility. Instead, the earth seemed to be charging up at us. A little village lay in our path. For a moment we wondered if we should land on some housetop, but we just cleared the roofs and there before us lay the shining Trent bordered by green fields.

"Get ready. Don't jump out or let go the ropes," commanded Spencer. The earth rushed up. "Bend your knees and crouch down low!" shouted Spencer. "Steady. . . ."

This looked like the end. My special Providence had no chance this time, I thought, as we waited for the crash.

It came. We were hurled into a heap in the bottom of the basket. We had skimmed a barn roof with only a few feet to spare. The basket, with its human load, had crashed at thirty miles an hour on a ploughed field. I have never been

able to sort out the events of the next few minutes accurately. A sense of utter confusion remains. There we were, a struggling heap in the bottom of the basket. Then with a huge leap the basket crashed through a hedge. Here we stuck for a moment. Spencer was doing his utmost. He struggled frantically to get the anchor grounded, but it was firmly entangled in the ropes. The wind was doing its utmost to kill us. Still another gust came, and then another, and we bumped sickeningly over a third field, all huddled together and clinging to the ropes with the courage of despair. It seemed to me then that it would be a miracle if we came out of this with our lives. Looking back on those awful minutes it seems incredible that we were not pounded to unconsciousness, for the earth struck up at us with hammer blows.

The fourth hedge loomed up, and again we crashed through. This last obstruction saved us, for the impact shook the anchor loose and it became embedded in the ground. With a series of frightful jerks we were brought to a standstill, the balloon flapping on the ground with the three of us—my brother, Captain Spencer, and myself—all in a struggling heap beside it, hardly aware of whether we were alive or dead.

We crawled out of the mess. Spencer and my brother were bleeding profusely, and I felt that I had been pounded with some monstrous battering-ram and rammed full with mouthfuls of dirt. Our clothes were in shreds. We had been dragged through hedges and fields for upwards of a mile. Two hundred yards away the river Trent flowed peacefully towards the sea. As usual, when I got into difficulties, we had stopped just—just in time.

# ESCAPE FROM THE SOVIETS

By

TATIANA TCHERNAVIN

*The author of this account was a Russian woman of the educated and literary class. Nobility had been conferred on her father, who was the son of a peasant, when he received his University degree. Her husband, too, was a Professor at the University at Petersburg. In 1918 their son was born—the first year of the Bolshevik rule—and from that time they suffered not only from the famine and social distress that followed the revolution, but as members of a class suspected by the OGPU of holding anti-communist views. In 1930 Madam Tchernavin's husband was arrested. In February 1931, she herself was taken away to prison, leaving her thirteen-year-old son alone. After five months she was released, but learned that her husband had been sent north to a penal camp. She was allowed to visit him, and there they made the first rough plan to escape. In the summer he was moved to the shores of the White Sea, to do research work on marine zoology. Here again his wife and son were allowed to visit him. From here they set out on their dangerous journey to the Finnish border*

IT had rained the whole day before, but towards evening the wind changed and the sky cleared. The villagers were preparing to go fishing or haymaking at dawn.

"If we don't get off to-morrow, all is lost," said my husband. "In another two days your permit expires and you will have to go home. I'll never get sent to a place as good as this again."

"Very well, let us set off to-morrow."

"I'll go to our headquarters to-day and give in a report of my work—they like that—and also remind them that to-morrow is my off-day. Then they won't miss me till the day after."

When he went away, taking the boy with him, I looked



for the tenth time over our things. I simply could not get the most essential ones packed into three knapsacks. Sugar and bacon took up a lot of room, and we had to take some rice and a few rusks as well. And we had to have a change of underclothes and something warm, too.

Late in the evening when the boy was asleep my husband and I sorted everything out for the last time.

We went on packing and repacking till late at night. I grew quite dizzy, and my husband's back began to ache, so we had to go to bed without finishing our job.

I could not go to sleep till daybreak and then it was time to get up. The boy ran to wash himself at the bay.

"We must make haste and finish packing," my husband hurried me. "When shall we tell the boy?"

"On the way."

"He'll wonder why we are taking the knapsacks."

"I'll tell him we are going for a picnic and will sleep out. I'll tell our landlady the same."

We sat down to breakfast but were too excited to eat.

When we had finished and the boy had gone to get the boat ready, my husband stopped me:

"We can't leave the place so untidy—it gives the show away."

We washed up and tidied the room. We kept getting in each other's way, unable to master our agitation.

"How much longer will you be?" said the boy coming in. "All the villagers have gone. Shall I take the sail, Daddy?"

"Yes, do. We are just coming. Take this knapsack."

"Where is the compass?"

"I brought it here and put it on the table."

"It isn't there."

Superstitious fear possessed me. I knew I had brought the compass into the room. It was not on the table, not on the window-sills. We had had an awful time with that compass already. A prisoner found in possession of a compass is shot, because a compass is regarded as certain proof of his planning to escape. My husband had given his compass to me to hide. When a prisoner's relatives come on a visit, the OGPU often makes a search in their lodgings to make sure that they had not brought with them anything forbidden. I wrapped the compass in paper and hid it among the onions in a sieve in the larder. Our landlady wanted the sieve one day and turned out the onions on the floor. I nearly went

off my head looking for my tiny paper parcel in that larder. I found it at last under a potato bag, and now it was lost again.

Mechanically I picked up my husband's cap—and there was the compass. He gave it to me again. He, poor man, believed that I was his guide to safety, and really I was a dead weight dragging us all down.

I had no pocket ; I wore a peasant kerchief over my head so that my hat would not attract attention. I tied the compass and the map into the corner of my kerchief.

What evil spirit prompted me to do that !

Now everything was ready and we had to leave our last shelter.

My husband took me by the hands and kissed me. We were both excited and happy—we were just going to take the first step towards our new life.

We left the room, carefully shutting the door behind us. The village was deserted ; only tiny children were playing in the road and an old man sat outside his cottage.

We pushed off. The boy took the rudder oar. His father had been teaching him to use it, but he was still very bad at it.

We had to go against the wind and the tide, and our boat moved slowly.

The boy was in excellent spirits, fidgeted about and talked incessantly. My husband felt unhappy and irritable.

What was I to do ? If I told the boy that this was not a picnic he would be upset, and it would be difficult in the boat to soothe and comfort him. It would mean more loss of time.

I changed places with the boy. I managed the rudder oar still worse, and he and my husband were continually correcting me. I suffered in silence but at last I tossed my head in exasperation and—I saw the compass and the map slowly sink into the deep water. On my shoulder lay the empty corner of my kerchief that had come undone.

"What ?" said my husband, not daring to believe his eyes.

"The compass . . . and the map," I answered, choking.

"Well, it's Fate," said he, looking at me sadly and kindly.

"Why do you take on so, Mother ? It doesn't matter ; we can buy another when we come home and send it to Daddy," the boy said naïvely.

I could not answer. I felt very bad. I gave the rudder to my son, and sat down at the bottom of the boat. My

head reeled, and I kept seeing the greenish water and the little metal box sinking into the depths.

"We shall have to struggle for another two hours if the wind does not drop," my husband said.

He had been rowing for four hours already. His hands were blistered and one blister burst, showing raw flesh. His heart was evidently feeling the strain, he was getting breathless. I took his place for a time, but I was not much use.

At the last projection of the shore we stopped to take breath and to see if there was any one at the end of the bay where our real escape was to begin. There seemed to be nobody there. The wind had dropped. Evening was coming on.

"What shall we do?" my husband asked me quietly. "Perhaps we'd better go back?"

"You decide. If you think we can go without a compass and a map, I am ready."

"If it keeps fine, I shall find the direction by the sun. We shall get to Finland right enough, though it may take us a day or two longer."

"Then let us go."

Rowing was easier now. Suddenly we heard loud human voices. It was the haymakers making a fire and settling for the night. Seeing our boat they called us to join them, or perhaps simply exchanged remarks about us.

We sharply turned into another cove which appeared empty, but at the very end of it we saw the black silhouette of a fisherman. He was fixing his net, moving about leisurely.

The question was, what line would these people take? Our only hope was that it would not occur to them that we were runaways: no one had yet attempted to escape with a wife and a child.

We waited among the reeds. The fisherman finished his job and went away, and the others did not trouble themselves about us.

Then my husband rowed us up to a footpath and left there the basket with the remains of food and the sail, making it look as though it had been hidden. Then he rowed us to the mouth of a stream. We stepped out of the boat.

"Wait for me here; I'll dispose of the boat and come back."

My husband came back so noiselessly that we only saw him when he stood beside us.

"Fetch me some water, dear." He drank greedily.

"Now, let us go; we must clear out of here as soon as possible."

We put on our knapsacks and walked along an indistinct path blocked by fallen branches and trees. I had no time to think of anything: the knapsack weighed me down, I kept stumbling against the branches, I was gasping for breath, and my one concern was not to fall or to lag behind.

We walked like that for about an hour. The forest was plunged into an even twilight; there was no real darkness.

"Let us rest here and have a drink," said my husband cheerfully but almost in a whisper.

"And where shall we put up for the night?" asked the boy, whispering like his father.

"Darling, we shall not put up for the night at all," I said.

"We are going to Finland, escaping from U.S.S.R."

The boy looked at me and, quite overcome, hid his face on his father's shoulder.

"Poor darling Daddy. . . ."

His father kissed and petted him.

"You'll have a hard time of it, dear; the journey will be very difficult, but if we escape we shall be free people, there will be no OGPU."

The boy did not know what to say: it was night, we were in a wild forest, we could not return home, we had to go into a strange country. . . . But he understood that it was for his father's sake.

"Let's go," he said.

When we stopped to rest again, he told the boy all about our plans.

"This night we must walk as far as ever we can. We may be missed to-morrow: the haymakers saw us, and we shall not have returned to our lodgings. They'll let the OGPU know. It's just possible that they won't be ready to go after us at once, but they have a cutter and can get across the bay in an hour or two. This path goes to the timber-works, about twenty or twenty-five miles from here. As soon as we get past them, we'll turn towards the mountains, and there they won't find us."

"Daddy, is it far to Finland?"

"Yes, darling, it is. About seventy miles as the crow flies, and we may have to walk a good hundred. And when we get there we may have to walk for several days before we find any people. But that won't matter, so long as we have crossed the frontier."

We walked on again, and in the midnight darkness lost the path which we still needed, because it saved us time. The boy was frightened, and when his father went off to look for it, he began to complain that he felt ill and could not walk any farther.

"Lie down and cover yourself up with your coat, head and all, so that the gnats don't bite you. We cannot go back, because your father and I would be shot. Go to sleep."

He curled himself up on the ground and went to sleep. That was his only moment of weakness; we never heard another complaint from him.

My husband found the path and we went on. When dawn appeared behind the hills, the forest, ravines, and swamps seemed less terrifying. We came upon some buildings, decided that they were the timber-works depot, and having left them behind, resolved to have a little sleep by a fallen pine tree.

"Take off your boots and hang up your leg-wrappers to dry. The chief thing is to keep our feet in good condition," my husband instructed me.

The child dropped asleep blissfully. I could not go to sleep because of my heart, but a drowsiness stole over me. I vaguely felt that the sun was beginning to be warm, but suddenly big drops of rain fell upon me. I had to wake my husband and hastily retrieve our boots and leg-wrappers. The boy slept while pulling on his boots; I tried to push him awake, but he put his head in my lap and went to sleep again. He was warm all over though he lay on the bare ground.

"The path goes farther west, the rain will soon stop; we must hurry on," said my husband, who had been reconnoitring. "Make haste; it's five o'clock. We've lost two hours here."

We set off at a quick pace. We thought that we had passed the timber-works depot and that the path led only to the cutting in the forest.

I had not yet noticed anything suspicious when I suddenly saw my husband bend and, as it were, roll down a steep slope; the boy and I did the same.

Over the edge of the slope I saw that there were two or three houses in front of us. At the other bank of the river there was another house. There did not seem to be any one about.

Panic-stricken we dashed into the forest, crossed a marsh,

and went up a hill. I lost all sense of direction. My veil was torn in several places, gnats got under it. and were devouring my ears and blinding my eyes. Two mackintoshes and a coat rolled up into a bundle which I carried on my back came undone, and I had to take them on my arm. The sun was burning, and there was a moist heat in the forest. I was gasping for breath, and could not catch up with my husband and son: they evidently saw something and ran, bending to the ground, going uphill all the way. At last they sat down behind a huge pine tree that had fallen on the ground; they were completely shielded by it. They were going to rest and have something to eat. I could not bear the thought of food; a vein was throbbing in my throat and all I wanted was to lie down.

A few minutes passed. My heart was beginning to beat more evenly when I heard the clear sound of an axe quite near. I sat up, forgetting about the mosquitoes. My son, who was lying behind the pine tree, waved to me angrily. My husband crawled to the other side of the tree in the direction of the sound. It appeared that we had settled within some twenty-five yards of a house that was hidden by the trees. I hurriedly pulled on my hat, wrapped up my head with the veil, snatched up the coats in a bundle, and we dashed across a clearing covered with dazzling white deer-moss. Our one thought was to hide, for if we were seen it might be the end of us.

We ran so long as we had any strength left. At last my husband took us to a pine tree on a steep slope and told us to lie down and rest while he went to scout.

"There are people all round," he said when he came back. "There's a lake and a house over there; I heard voices. We must clear out of here as soon as possible. This must be the timber-works headquarters."

Barely stopping to take breath, he led us on. We went through copses that looked like a park, past a lake with white water-lilies, went down into ravines, climbed hills—I could make nothing of it. It seemed to me that we were circling round and round and would find ourselves in the same place again. But no—he took us to the slope of a hill and said firmly: "The west is over there." It might be, for aught I knew; I was quite sure that left to myself I could never have found either the west or the east and should have perished there, devoured by mosquitoes.

I do not know how far we had walked that day, but we had

to stop early, because both the boy and I were completely exhausted. His father found for us a huge fir tree with fluffy branches that almost reached the ground. It was dry underneath, on the thick layer of fallen pine needles. The boy snuggled under his overcoat and dropped sound asleep.

We left behind at last all traces of human habitation. There was virgin forest all round us. When we sat down to rest, choosing some fairly high spot in the wind where there were fewer mosquitoes, flocks of birds gathered around us, watching us with interest.

Towards evening the hills grew steeper and more wild. A curious white mist gathered around us. We could see nothing in the distance and constantly stumbled upon rocks or huge blocks of granite. Utterly worn out we climbed at last on to a plateau where a few trees twisted out of shape by the wind were dotted about.

"It's not much of a place. When it is light one can see right through it."

"We'll move on at daybreak."

"There's no water here."

"I am not thirsty, and the boy is dropping with fatigue."

"Very well; lie down and I'll go and look for water."

Restless creature! He was so excited at being free that he was ready to walk night and day till he left behind the land where he had been a slave and a convict. But he had us two on his hands. The boy was so tired that he dropped fast asleep before I had had time to pull off his boots. I was as tired as he, but the moment I lay down I had the horrible thought that my husband might not find us! I jumped up and walked two or three paces away from our tree—I could see nothing. Then I came out on to the most open part of the plateau and decided to stand there till he came back. Minutes passed. It was damp and cold, I badly wanted to sit down, but he might miss me then. However much I strained my eyes I could see nothing but the fantastic distorted silhouettes of the trees.

At last what looked like one of these silhouettes moved up towards me.

"Where is the boy? I could hardly find our place."

"Asleep under the pine tree."

"Which one?"

"That one, over there. . . . No, more to the left. . . . No, I don't know which."

Now my son was lost!

"Stand here so that I can have a landmark and I'll go and look for him," said my husband.

He soon came back saying: "I've found him."

There was no doubt that he still had plenty of the primitive instincts of a huntsman: he had no difficulty in picking his way in the dark forest, while I felt utterly lost and helpless.

We went to sleep too, but presently my husband got up and made some semolina porridge. We were not hungry, though it was our first hot meal during the three days. Big yellow mosquitoes kept dropping into the spoons. The boy was too sleepy to open his mouth properly, though we put plenty of sugar on his semolina. We all felt very tired.

We set off in the same direction as before, but soon found that we were going farther away from the valley and the hills were getting higher and higher.

"We must go down to the river," said I. "We are losing the main valley."

"Why, how can we go to the path where they may be stalking us at this very minute?" my husband protested.

We walked on.

"I am sure something is leading us astray. I wonder if that river has a tributary?" I persisted.

My husband gave in. We decided to go down and see in what direction the river was flowing. The lower we descended, the thicker was the undergrowth; our way was continually blocked by dead trees with sharp, prominent branches; it was very marshy underfoot. Our feet were wet through, our hands scratched, our clothes torn, but it was worth while: we found that a tributary of the river the course of which we were following really did take us away from the main valley. That tributary was not marked on the map, which we had studied carefully and still remembered. It was essential for us to cross it, and it was wide, rapid, and deep. Fortunately it divided into several streams near the junction with the bigger river. The rich meadow-land all round was overgrown with white unbelliferous flowers and bright pink mullen. My husband went to look for a ford, and we rested.

Then we began the crossing: my husband found two small trees that had fallen into the water almost opposite each other, and led across first me, then the boy, and then carried one by one our knapsacks. Our bridge was rickety and threatened to give way under us; at the opposite bank we had to step on to a partially submerged old stump, wet



and slippery. The crossing took us over an hour. A lovely smooth path made by the deer ran along the edge of the water.

"No, that won't do," my husband said decisively. "The path is so good that men may use it as well as deer. If the OGPU have a grain of sense they won't hunt for us in the mountains, but will waylay us here. No, my dears, we must get back to the hills."

We began climbing up the sunlit, sparsely wooded slope where we could still be seen.

"I wonder if we'd better have a rest," my husband said irresolutely. "I am tired out with that crossing."

"Excellent. Let us have a rest. We'll walk all the better afterwards."

We sat down behind a huge fir tree that hid us from the valley. The father and the son went to sleep. I sat and sewed. I had to make myself a proper mosquito-net because my ears were one sore; the boy's mosquito-net wanted mending. I had no material to patch it up with and had to tear the hem of my apron for the purpose. This was the best rest we were having since we started. My husband had not had more than four hours' sleep during the three days.

I was sorry to wake them, but there was nothing for it. Clouds were gathering and we had to hurry.

We went on again, climbing hills and descending into ravines. The slope on the opposite bank of the river was very picturesque. It was all covered with white deer-moss, with small fir trees dotted about here and there.

The bank on this side was growing steeper and more rocky, and between the stones it was a wet bog. Towards sunset we reached a point where the river turned sharply to the north.

"We must not follow the river course any longer, but walk on towards the west and cut across the ridge over there, where that depression is. We'll have to wait for dusk to cross the river," said my husband anxiously.

We chose a secluded spot and sat down. The boy wrapped himself up in his coat, head and all, and immediately went to sleep.

We roused him when the sun had set and a white mist began to rise from the ground. We were going to descend to the river, but it was not a simple matter. We had to go down what looked a sheer wall of rock. We tried to find a better place, but it was the same everywhere. The sun had set, darkness was coming on, thick mist was rising in the

valley, and we could not waste any time. We had at all costs to cross the river that night so as to walk through the dangerous open ground on the other side before daybreak.

It was only from sheer despair that one could attempt such a descent. Sometimes we picked our way along projections in the rock where there was scarcely room to put one's foot, sometimes we rolled down in the hope of catching hold of a bush on the way—and the bush, instead of being a support, slid down with us. We had to lower our knapsacks, too, which we could not carry on our backs.

The boy was wonderful. He was very sleepy, and probably considered that it was no use thinking about danger when father and mother were with him and no doubt knew where they were leading him. And so he quite readily rolled down the slope towards his father, who caught him in his arms and sent him on farther, in front of or behind the knapsacks. When at last we found ourselves at the bottom and looked back on our course, I made haste to turn away so as not to think of it. I do not know how it was that we did not break our arms and legs.

Crossing the river in the mist and darkness is also a thing I don't care to recall. The river was wider and swifter than the one we had crossed in the morning. It would have been impossible to wade through it in the cold night, amidst clouds of mosquitoes. We had to cross by walking on the thick branches and whole trees that had fallen into the river, but the first one we stepped on broke down under my husband's weight, and he had some difficulty in getting out of the water. The rest, too, were very unsteady, and we had to walk on them in turn, while the dark water of the mountain river roared and foamed underneath.

But we had no choice in the matter. Our one dream was to find a dry spot and go to sleep.

It was an unpleasant night. The only dry spot we could find was by the roots of a huge fir tree. We had to lie there doubled up, because it was hopelessly wet all round.

Our boots, leg-wrappings, and socks were wet through; we had to take them off and wrap our feet in dry rags. Mosquitoes were so dreadful that we had to wind round our necks and arms everything we possessed—stockings, pants, shirts.

The boy slept pressed close to me, and managed to get warm. My husband dozed off, but woke up every minute with a groan. I simply could not go to sleep.

As soon as the mist began to lift, I woke up my husband. He was shivering with the cold and could not stop his teeth from chattering. It was only three in the morning. I was sorry to wake the boy, who was sound asleep, but we had to make haste and go away from the slope where our dark figures could be seen miles away against the background of white moss.

I was afraid that the boy would be shivering like his father, but no, he woke up rosy and cheerful as though he had been sleeping in bed.

"What are you doing?" he asked sleepily.

As we walked, the moss squelched underfoot like a wet sponge; cold water got inside our boots. But we felt warmer walking, and anyway it was better than sitting in the swamp.

It was growing dangerously light, and we suddenly came upon several paths running parallel to one another. There were no human footprints on them, but no trace of deer either. Carefully stepping across so as not to leave a footmark we rushed in alarm higher up the incline.

The frontier might be near and these paths might have been made by the frontier-guards. Every moment we expected to see a horseman in khaki uniform with green stripes. He could easily catch us all—there was nowhere to hide.

We were desperately thirsty. The moss underfoot was so wet that one could wring it out, but there was not a single stream or pool. Occasionally we saw some cranberries, but they were still unripe—white and bitter.

We walked for one hour, for two hours, we came to some huge blocks of granite with small, twisted birch trees and willows growing in the crevices, and yet the top of the crest seemed as far off as ever.

The sun had risen. In the rarified transparent air its light seemed keen and cold. In the distance, beyond the thin layers of cloud, we caught glimpses of dark mountain ridges with a hard, menacing outline.

At last we came upon a hollow surrounded by enormous blocks of bare granite. There was a tiny lake at the bottom. The water in it looked black and still, and next to it lay a piece of granite flat as a table.

"I can no more," I cried. I felt so weak that I could not stand. I threw myself on the granite, covering my head with the mackintosh through which the mosquitoes could not sting.

I lost consciousness instantly and dreamt that I had sunk into the still, dark water of the lake.

I was awakened by a whisper close by. The father and

the son were getting tea ready. There was hot water in the kettle, a mug did the duty of a teapot, lumps of bacon were placed on the rusks. Sugar could not be put out, because mosquitoes would settle on it immediately, though there were much fewer of them here than down in the marsh. This was the second time in the four days that we had tea. It tasted incredibly good, and revived us wonderfully.

The sun stood high, the sky was clear and blue. We felt as safe in our hollow as in an impregnable fortress. Now that we were out of the dangerous valley it seemed impossible for our pursuers to detect us. *We had escaped.* It was a delightful moment of rest.

After resting we walked straight, as we thought, in the direction of the frontier. It was somewhere on the other side of the ridge, but we did not know how far it was. Walking was easy now there was grass and not wet moss underfoot. The trees—birches and firs—were beautiful as in a park: the firs were big and shapely, the birches small, with twisted branches, curiously like apple trees. It was warm, a light breeze was blowing, and mosquitoes did not pester us. The bare, rocky ridge in front stood out so sharply against the sky that we could not help wondering whether it was the actual frontier.

Suddenly the boy began to lag behind.

"What is it?" I saw that something was wrong.

"It's all right. Go on, I'll walk behind."

But, turning round suddenly, I found that he was dragging one foot and leaning heavily on his stick.

"Why are you limping?"

"I knocked my foot; it will be all right in a minute."

"Does your boot hurt you?"

"No, go on," he answered irritably. He was obviously doing his best, understanding how fatal the slightest delay might be, but the pain and the effort of walking made his face look pale and drawn. We went on so long as he could walk, but at last we had to stop and see what was the matter.

We stopped by two magnificent fir trees. Their branches spread widely over the ground and the earth underneath, covered with dry needles, was soft and warm. Breaking off the small dry branches inside we crawled under the branches and hid there as in a tent. The boy lay down; we took off his boot, unwrapped his sore foot, and went cold with horror: there was a huge, ugly-looking abscess on his heel. How could the child have walked at all!

We said nothing; the boy looked questioningly at us, and we at each other.

"Whatever shall we do, my poor, poor boy!" said his father in despair.

"I don't know, Daddy," he answered so sweetly that I felt like crying.

"We must open it," I said.

"But how can we, when we have no disinfectant?"

"We can disinfect the razor in the fire. Water here is pure." I took a roll of bandages out of the knapsack. Another piece of bad luck—they had got wet in the marsh during the night. They would have to be washed in a stream and dried in the sun, in the hope that everything must be pure at such an altitude. My husband went to look for water and we remained lying under the fir tree.

My husband came back, pale and anxious. He knew better than we did how desperate our situation was.

"I can't cut it, my hands are shaking," he said, when he prepared the razor.

I volunteered, but set about it so clumsily that I might have made matters worse.

"You'd better cut it, Daddy! Don't be afraid, I'll be all right. Only tell me when you are going to begin."

He made ready, clutched my hand, and said:

"Well, cut it."

His father cut the skin over the whole surface of the abscess. White, liquid pus squirted out and there seemed to be none left.

"You see, Daddy, it wasn't so bad as you thought."

His father kissed and petted him and then went outside to calm down and have another look round.

"You must sleep now," I said to the boy. "You know that sleep helps when one is ill."

He closed his eyes obediently but could not go to sleep, he was too overwrought. Suddenly something rustled overhead and a cone fell upon us.

"Mother, look, it's a squirrel!" the boy whispered, delighted. Quickly and confidently the squirrel came down and, settling on a branch, took a peep at us.

"It's your little house, isn't it?" the boy said, forgetting all his troubles. "You are mistress here, aren't you? Never mind, dear squirrel, we shall soon be gone."

The squirrel moved its tail and came still closer, watching us attentively with its bright black eyes.

"Mother, it's a good thing that the squirrel has come to us, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because it shows that it hasn't been frightened and that there are no men near."

"And no dogs?"

"No. Sleep, you are the squirrel's guest."

"We'll call this place 'The Squirrel's House,' shall we?"

The boy cheered up completely and went to sleep. The squirrel jumped to the next tree.

In two hours' time the boy woke up. His wound looked healthy, though of course no doctor would have allowed him to walk. But we had to go on. The frontier was near and the guards, who had no doubt received a wireless message, must have been hunting for us high and low.

We bandaged the boy's foot and set out towards the mountain pass. He limped, though he walked fairly cheerfully; but we felt sick with anxiety as we looked at him.

The pass seemed near at first, but as always in the mountains, it kept receding into the distance. The trees were getting smaller and farther apart and at last disappeared altogether. The slope was quite bare and we could be easily seen from any point at the top.

Our position was so desperate that, had I had my way, I would have flung all precaution to the winds and walked straight on. But my husband insisted that we should run as fast as we could from one block of granite to another, lie there till we got our breath and run to the next shelter.

"Bear up!" we said to the boy. "We'll rest on the other side of the pass if there are any trees or bushes there, but here you must run as fast as you can."

I do not know what the boy thought. With a set look on his face he ran, lay down, ran again, and showed neither fear nor hesitation.

We reached the top at last. On the other side the ground sloped gradually; juniper bushes, small firs, and birches grew fairly near the top. In the first sheltered spot we could find we threw down our knapsacks and lay down on the soft and almost dry moss.

The country that lay before us was completely unknown to us; we had to consider which way we were to go. A river was flowing to the west. On all the maps which we had seen, the frontier ran along the watershed from which a river

flowed west. Only one river was marked on the maps, but here we saw two more rivers that were its tributaries. Besides, according to the most optimistic maps, it was at least twenty miles from the end of the valley, which we had left the night before, to the frontier—and here we were looking at the river that flowed west.

“If I only knew where the frontier is, I would run to it at once!” my husband exclaimed.

We drank some water, slung on our knapsacks, and went on.

At first walking was quite easy. Though the trees were small there were so many of them that we could not be seen from anywhere. The ground was almost dry. It sloped evenly towards the bottom of the valley where evidently all the three rivers met. The place was so wild that very likely no one had been here since the creation of the world.

I very much wanted to stop for the night while we were still on dry ground, but we were anxious to cross the valley and reach the next ridge which might possibly mark the frontier. Soon we found ourselves in a real marsh which stretched on either side of the river. Our feet were wet through and we were covered with mosquitoes.

When it grew quite dark we stopped to rest on a damp hillock, utterly exhausted.

“I’ll try and see if I can find a drier place. You stay here,” said my husband, and disappeared in the mist. I very much doubted that he would succeed, but he soon came back:

“This way, please; I’ve found an hotel, the rooms are ready.”

The joke cheered us up and we readily followed him through the water-logged moss. We were wet up to the knees as it was, and a little more did not matter.

Suddenly we felt something firm underfoot: three huge fir trees, growing close together, had drained a small bit of ground. We could not see in the mist what was beyond.

How jolly it was! We chattered light-heartedly, confident that no OGPU could come near us. I rung out all our leg-wrappers, spread them up to dry, and re-banded the boy’s foot in the dark. His wound was not very painful. I covered him up with two coats to keep his feet warm. A cold mist was creeping nearer and nearer. As I had had a sleep on the way I gave my coat to my husband and wrapped up his neck and arms with all the dry rags that I could find. In my cotton dress and overall I curled up under the mackintosh,

but before I had had time to doze off I heard my husband groan.

"What is it, dear?"

"I am frozen and I have a dreadful pain."

He sat there doubled up, shaking all over.

"Where does it hurt?"

"Everywhere. I have pains in my back, in my stomach, I don't know what to do with myself. If only I could get warm!"

It seemed so simple to make a fire, but it was impossible. To light a fire at night when we were close to the frontier! It was out of the question.

His tossing about had made all his wrappings come undone, and his arms and neck were covered with mosquitoes.

In despair I twisted all the rags round him again so as at least to protect him against mosquitoes.

"You must lie down next to me and cover yourself up with the mackintosh."

"I can't lie down; I am doubled up with pain."

"Nonsense, you must try. Perhaps you'll be warmer."

Gradually I induced him to lie on his side so that I could press myself close to him and keep the mackintosh over him, trying to warm the air under it with my breath. The mackintosh reached only to our knees and the mosquitoes were devouring my legs, for while I was attending to him all my wrappings had come undone. But I could not spare a thought for that. When he dozed off for a few minutes I hastily began to think.

"What shall we do if in the morning he is too ill to continue the journey?"

Light a fire and make him some tea, and perhaps fix up a warm pack. I could use the oilcloth bag in which we keep the sugar. Rest the whole day and see how he feels.

"If it is typhus or peritonitis, he will himself understand that it's hopeless. We would stay with him to the last. I would make him see what happiness it is to die in the open, a free man and not a convict. After all, we have had four days of freedom, and that has meant so much joy, that if Fate had offered us to buy it at the cost of our lives we should have accepted the bargain without hesitation. Death here is only terrifying because the boy would be left alone.

How can I save him?

If my husband dies I must go back with the boy, because I could not find the way to Finland. We could do the journey



back in three days, perhaps less. When we got as far as the timber works, where we last heard the sound of the axe, I would say good-bye to the boy and send him to the workmen alone. I must tell him to wait till I have gone some distance so that they could not track me, and then throw myself in the river. They might take pity on the boy and not kill him. Yes, that would be the only way to save him. . . .

While I was thinking all this, my husband seemed a little better. He was no longer racked with pain and lay quietly, evidently asleep, though sometimes he groaned slightly. His hands felt warmer. His breath came evenly. I was afraid to stir, though my whole body felt stiff and numb. I was very drowsy, but I dared not go to sleep, as though my conscience will somehow save my son from blood poisoning and my husband from his mysterious and terrible pain.

"Is it light? Time to go?" my husband asked in alarm.

"It's quite early yet. About three in the morning."

"We must go." He jumped up and stepped out from under the tree to have a look at the sky.

I was dreadfully disinclined to move. . . . And it was so difficult to wake the boy! Our leg-wrappings were still damp, the boots were quite wet and it was difficult to pull them on.

My husband came back, pale and anxious.

"Hurry up! The hill we have to climb is not well wooded, we must get there before the sun is up. It's not far to the river."

We set off, and immediately found ourselves in the marsh once more. Dazzling white moss was all round, and suddenly in this wild spot, within a few yards of our camping-ground which, we thought, was as far off from everywhere as the bottom of the sea, we came across some paths! Two or three paths running from north to south—along the frontier? There were no footprints of any kind, but the paths were clearly marked. We dashed across them, afraid of stepping on a twig or catching at a branch. We walked on breathlessly, without looking back or thinking of anything, intent on getting away as far as we could.

"Now the river will stop us and we shall be done for!" my husband remarked gloomily.

But no, the river was broken up into so many rivulets that we had only to step or jump over them. We sometimes used by way of a bridge rotten tree-stumps that had fallen

into the river, or simply waded through the water which was not more than knee-deep. Branches of the low-growing Arctic willows got under our feet and caught us in the face as we walked.

We crossed the river. The ascent to the ridge on the opposite bank proved to be as marshy as the valley. Even in comparatively steep places the thick willow bushes grew among moss hillocks with black water in between. We had to walk on those hillocks though they trembled like jelly as soon as one stepped on them.

There were low white clouds overhead. The sun was trying to come through ; one part of the sky began to look lighter than the rest. We stopped and eagerly waited for the sun to come out.

It showed itself, a flat red disk without any rays, and in a minute or two disappeared again without a trace.

At first we walked fairly cheerfully, hoping that the sun would come out again. But the sky was a uniform white. It was impossible to trace the course of the river that lost itself in the swamps ; the ridge that we had seen from the distance disappeared behind the nearer hills ; we could not tell whether the slope that we were climbing had imperceptibly led us in the wrong direction.

I was feeling so wretched that I was afraid to go near the others. It was I who had ruined them by losing the compass. I was suffering agonies of remorse.

My husband was hesitating ; he led us sometimes uphill as though hoping to see something in the distance, sometimes came lower, wondering if he could hear the sound of the river which apparently turned to the south.

At last he took one more look at the sky. The clouds had come still lower and crept over the tops of the fir trees, scattering tiniest drops of moisture over us.

"We cannot go on," he said. "It's comparatively dry here. Wait for me ; I'll go and find a place to camp in."

The next day rose but there was not a trace of the sun. The father and the son went to have a look round and brought nearly half a saucepanful of large, moist whortleberries. We sprinkled them with sugar and ate them. Now my husband lay down and I walked about watching for the sun. The sky was white all over. I kept glancing up every two or three minutes but there was no change. Suddenly I noticed a slight movement in the clouds. They lifted and began to part.

"Shall I wake Daddy?" the boy asked eagerly.

"Wait a minute."

A tiny rim of a flat red disk showed between the clouds.

"Run and wake Daddy."

We took our bearings: the valley which led us south the day before, now turned to the west. Farther on it turned again, but anyway we could not be certain of our direction for several hours at a time.

Overjoyed, we hastily made ready and walked down towards the river. The bank was overgrown with luxuriant vegetation; a mass of brightly-coloured beetles and butterflies came out in the sunshine. We drank some cold water, which tasted good after twenty-four hours without a drink, and climbed up once more so as not to follow the course of the river which made a large loop.

There had once been a forest fire here: the ground was covered with charred trunks and between them a few tall pine trees stood out.

"We'll have to cross the river. I wish I had thought of it earlier. It may be too deep here," my husband said.

"But I can swim across, Daddy. Only how will mother manage? She doesn't swim very well."

"I too can swim if it's not too far. Don't you be so superior."

We came down to the bank. Again the ground grew marshy, willow bushes were in the way, mosquitoes buzzed.

"The water is sure to be icy, I am afraid you'll both catch cold."

"Nonsense, and, anyway, we shall have a good wash. We haven't had a bath for six days."

The boy did not share my feelings in this respect. He rather enjoyed not having to wash or brush his teeth.

My husband went into the water first. The water was up to his waist from the first and soon he had to raise above his head the knapsack which he carried in his arms. The water was foaming all round him. We watched his every step.

"The water will be up to my neck," said the boy.

"It will be up to my shoulders, but the current is so strong I shan't be able to carry anything."

"Now it's shallower; he is nearly over."

"He is coming back; make haste and undress. Put your clothes into a bundle, the boots, too, and mind you don't lose your socks."

"Mother, mosquitoes!"

"Never mind; they won't touch you in the water."

His father took him across, defending him with his body against the strong current, then came back for me, and crossed the river twice again, carrying over our things. The water was icy, and he was shaking with the cold.

We were fearfully hungry after our bathe. We had not had a proper meal for six days; now and again we drank water with sugar and ate small pieces of rusks and bacon when we felt faint. We had been too tired to have a real appetite, but now we felt ravenous.

At last we came to a sheltered spot and sat down to have something to eat.

Suddenly I felt that some one was looking at me: a few steps from us stood a huge elk, watching us with a gracious and lordly expression. It was a splendid creature, with beautiful glossy fur. It looked well-groomed, content, and dignified. Magnificent spreading horns adorned its head like some wonderful crown. Its dark round eyes were intelligent and attentive.

To attract the attention of the others without alarming the animal, I blew on their necks. They looked up and saw the elk. For a few moments we gazed at him with admiration, while he looked at us with serene gravity. Then he walked away, glanced at us once more and disappeared.

"Mother!" said the boy enthusiastically. "What a beauty! I've never seen one like it."

"Elks are rare now," his father said. "They've been almost exterminated. In Finland it is forbidden by law to hunt elks, but in Russia they do kill them, of course. Last year they killed five hundred and probably more."

"Do you think it's a Finnish elk, Daddy? He looks proud, like an English lord, and so well-fed. I am sure he is not from U.S.S.R."

"It's not easy to tell by the look of an elk what country it belongs to," my husband said, laughing.

"Do you think we can really be in Finland by now?" he enquired.

"I think so," I answered. "The river does flow west on the whole; our maps were on a small scale and probably did not show every bend of it."

"I can hardly believe it. Well, come along."

We went on. The slope was steep and dry, covered with a pine forest. There was no undergrowth, not even any

whortleberry bushes. The sun was shining brightly and we had no difficulty about our direction.

We must have walked a good twenty miles that day, and only stopped when the sun went behind a cloud and a wide, marshy valley lay before us.

"I declare that we are in Finland!" said I. I am not sure that I quite believed it myself, but we badly needed a respite from our anxiety.

For the first time since we escaped we lit a bonfire, though we did it in a deep crevice between the hills. My husband brought huge dry branches and small dead trees, the boy picked up small wood, while I gathered some mushrooms and cooked our first soup.

"Mother, and what are you putting in with the mushrooms?"

"Rice and bacon."

"But how shall we eat it without bread?"

"It will be very good, you'll see."

He lay by the fire, dozing, and patiently waited for his supper.

At the top of the small fire over which I had been cooking my husband put a huge tree stump with sticking-out roots, placed some small wood underneath, and the flames went up like a big firework.

"What is it?" the boy asked, waking up.

"Our bonfire. Look, isn't it fine? Come and eat your supper." We sat down round the saucepan, close together.

"Don't be in a hurry, eat slowly, it's hot," I warned the boy. With a special feeling of respect for real, hot, satisfying food, we slowly took up in our spoons the thick rice soup with mushrooms and bacon, and ate in small mouthfuls, chewing carefully.

The boy dropped asleep the moment he swallowed his last spoonful; his face looked rosy and, as it were, rounder, after food. We sat by the fire, talking.

It was our first real conversation since we escaped.

Only that evening, by the fire, we ventured at last to speak of what lay before us. A warm and happy sense of intimacy descended upon us; long forgotten thoughts and feelings rose in our minds and our far-off youth seemed to have returned to us once more. Timidly, and as it were, shyly, we began to think of the future.

The next day our journey grew more difficult. The beautiful pine forest came to an end, and we had once more

to go up and down ravines and valleys. The sun came out occasionally, but it was difficult to find the way because the whole place was cut up by mountain ridges, big and small, going in different directions. It was becoming more and more doubtful whether we should ever find the Finnish River which was to guide us.

"The only thing we can do is to go towards the west," I insisted.

"But we can't go climbing all these mountain chains," my husband said. "We must find a good-sized valley and take our bearing from there."

He and the boy climbed up a hill and came down, very pleased.

"Some ten miles away there's a river which seems to run south, and there's a lot of leafy trees near it. It's a fine valley. If we are in Finland already, we need not be afraid of going south."

We reached the river after making several *détours* because of marshes, a wide side-stream, and so on. We found that it flowed north and if we followed it we would come right back into Russia.

It was a great blow to us. The river bank was one continuous marsh overgrown with wiry Arctic birch. The bank opposite tempted us by its white moss and pretty fir trees. We decided to wade across to it. We were exhausted, chilled to the bone, got a lot of our things wet, and found ourselves in a worse marsh than ever. We managed to light a bonfire under an uprooted fir tree and kept it up through half the night to dry a place where we could sleep.

The morning was damp and foggy.

"We must stay here till the sun comes out," my husband said.

"We must go on, for we shall never see the sun in this swamp," I objected.

After much hesitation we decided to go on. We came upon the same river which took another turn, waded across it and climbed uphill.

"I am not going to move from here till the sun comes out," said my husband.

We lit a bonfire and sadly lay down beside it. It came on to rain several times during the night. Our Soviet water-proofs let water through quite freely. The fire hissed, fighting the rain. It was a bad look-out.

I was awakened by a sharp exclamation of my husband's.

He was standing and pointing with a bitter laugh to the flat red disk of the sun rising from behind the very hill which we thought was in the west.

So the whole journey of the previous day had been wasted. We had to wade through the chilly river once more and climb to the place which we had left two evenings before.

A high ridge rising high above the line of the forest, and a perfect chaos of valleys and smaller ridges lay before us. We thought that we had completely lost the Finnish river we were in search of, and had no idea how we would find our way. But the boy, whose ideas on geography were distinctly vague, asked cheerfully how soon could we walk to the Bay of Bothnia, for we could not possibly miss that as we missed the river.

We reached the top of the ridge absolutely exhausted. A piercing, icy wind was blowing. The view that lay before us filled us with horror. We had been longing for a green, sunny valley, but instead we saw a huge, gloomy, cauldron-shaped hollow, from which there seemed to be no way out.

"We must go down, we shall be frozen here," I said.

"Once we go down we shall lose our bearings; we must take good stock of the place first," said my husband.

While we were looking round the boy huddled up behind a stone for shelter, quite subdued.

We did not suspect that we were actually standing on the frontier pass, right over the starting-place of the Finnish river, which we had given up for lost.

But in any case our position was very serious. It had taken us eight days, instead of three or four, to reach the frontier; three-quarters of our provisions, intended for ten days, were gone, and we were beginning to feel exhausted. Though we were safe now from pursuit and from frontier guards, we might easily perish in Finland if we did not find a way out of these wilds and come across human habitation.

Now we dragged ourselves along rather than walked. Our feet were in an awful condition—bruised, swollen, with festering wounds. Before starting a day's march we had to spend no end of time bandaging them; I had to tear up my chemise to make bandages, and every evening we discovered fresh sores.

My husband was the worst off, because his boots were falling to pieces. The thin layer of leather on the sole had worn through and showed pieces of birch bark inside. Soviet industry is certainly resourceful!

We were suffering from hunger, too. We reduced our daily portion to two or three tablespoonfuls of rice and two ounces of bacon which we added to the mushroom soup in the morning and evening. The rusks were finished. We had two lumps of sugar a day, one in the morning and one in the evening, and the boy had a third in the middle of the day.

A fresh misfortune was the cold. A north wind was blowing continually, and we were simply frozen in the night if we could not find enough dry wood to feed the fire all the time.

On one of those cold nights my husband had another attack of pains, and in the morning he found he could not use his left arm. He felt breathless, and when the pains came on again was not able to walk. We thought it was probably his heart. Overstrained by the life in the penal camp, by our march (we were already twelve days on the way) and the heavy weight he carried, it might give way any day. And what would become of us then?

Our only salvation would be to meet some one. We talked of nothing but where and how we could find any people.

It was our son who brought us the first message of hope.

"Daddy, there's a mark of an axe!" he cried in an almost frightened voice.

Indeed, an old tree in the depths of the forest had been marked by an axe, evidently some time ago.

"Very clever of you to notice it! Yes, that's the first sign of man we have seen. So, evidently people do come here sometimes."

Two hours later we came upon a clearing in the forest. It must have been made ten or fifteen years ago because it was covered with young growth; most of the trees had been taken away. Finally, the boy found a neat little peg with a Roman figure on it, probably indicating the number of the plot.

The following day, as we were skirting round a marsh, the boy saw two poles of equal height at the edge of it.

"Look, Daddy, what is this?"

Sore as our feet were, we went to look. There was a third pole, also with a pointed and charred end. It was an arrangement for drying hay.

A day later we made a discovery which seemed to us of enormous importance: we found a fence. A real, well-built, high fence, going from north to south across a beautiful forest.

We traced that fence for at least a mile each way and discovered nothing.



We learned afterwards that villagers living a good hundred miles away built that fence so that their deer, which they let off to pasture in the forest in the summer, should not cross over to the Russian side.

We found one day fresh traces of a bear ; but there was no sign of man.

Now that we were in Finland, on a big river, and bound to come to some dwelling sooner or later, everything depended on whether my husband's heart would last out till then. We still had a few lumps of sugar and a few pieces of bacon left. Should we be able to walk when these were gone ?

We were walking on the slope trodden down by elks when the boy cried suddenly :

" Daddy, a bottle ! "

It was only the bottom of a bottle, but it certainly was an eloquent sign of man. Farther along we found a heap of last year's hay, horse droppings, a blue rag. Three clear paths went from this place in different directions. It was a beautiful forest all round—splendid tall pines.

" Daddy, which path shall we take ? " the boy asked excitedly, as though we were coming to a house for certain.

" The middle one ; it is the most used of the three. "

The path, well trodden, but with no fresh traces of man, apparently led to the river. We could tell its presence by the thick growth of young elm, but we could not hear it ; it flowed quietly and peacefully.

" A house ! "

It was not a house but a low log hut, open on one side and roofed in with planks, sloping towards the open side. There was a shelf inside on which several dates and Finnish names were written. We did not see any names of places. The dates went fifteen and twenty years back, so there was no doubt that the place was well-known and that people came here. But when and what for ?

People could not be very far off, but how were we to find them when we had so little strength left and so few provisions ?

" I'll see if I can catch some fish, " said my husband, and went to the river.

My husband did not catch any fish, but he was rested and we went on. That was a terrible mistake. We ought to have thought it all out carefully and looked round, but we frivolously concluded that having found the hut we would soon discover a road. Things went against us almost at once : the path from the hut grew narrower, almost disappeared

among the elm bushes, appeared again and kept losing itself in the marsh. We struggled on for the rest of the day and spent the night on a tiny island in the biggest swamp we had ever seen. We very much wanted to go back to the hut ; it seemed incredible that there was no path from it at all. We must have made a mistake somewhere. We should probably have returned, but we were deceived by traces of horse's hoofs which we found on the path that had reappeared again. They were quite fresh, the horse was shod, and it looked exactly as though some one had just ridden there. But the path led us to a marsh and disappeared completely.

We had no idea that the Finns let their horses pasture in the forest, like the deer, and that the hoof-marks we saw were made by horses wandering at random or following an occasional path.

We might have been more careful if my husband had felt ill and had had to count every extra step, but as soon as he found himself in difficulties he thought of nothing but going on, and his pains left him—that's his temperament.

As soon as it was light, my husband went on ahead to scout. It was useless to protest : when he felt an access of energy, he had to work it off. My chief comfort was that he could walk so well again, forgetting all about his pains ; for the last few days I had been in terror that he would not get up at all after one of those attacks.

He came back in high spirits—the hut was within two hours' walk.

But what an agony that walk was ! One swamp after another—now full of small hillocks overgrown with small wiry birches, now one green quivering mass of slime. Gasping for breath and bathed in perspiration we walked for over four hours instead of two, and when we reached the hut at last we sank on the ground in utter exhaustion.

That night only the boy slept, but how heartrending it was to look at him ! He lay there without moving, his head was thrown back, his arm was bent awkwardly, as though his body did not belong to him. Children sleep like that when they have been weakened by a serious illness.

When in the morning we sat down to our saucepan of mushroom soup, my husband glanced at our feet. We did not put on our boots and stockings till the last moment so as not to chaff the sores that now covered our feet and ankles. He said sharply :

“ You cannot go on.”

The boy glanced at him in alarm. I, too, did not understand at first what he was driving at.

"Listen," he went on. "You must both stay here, in the hut. It's a noticeable place, every one must know it. I'll go by myself and find a village or a house much quicker. I cannot drag you through these marshes any more. I cannot bear to see you struggling on when you can hardly walk. If I go alone I need not pick my way and will find people in a couple of days; then I will come to fetch you and bring back some food."

It was so unexpected that I said nothing. Mastering my emotions I was trying to consider the matter objectively.

While I was thinking, the boy glanced anxiously at his father, who gazed into the fire without turning to look at me. He knew it would not be easy for me to remain behind in the forest, doing nothing, and perhaps perish with the boy; because, waiting for him, we should eat our last crumbs of provisions and be too weak to go in search of help.

"Go," I said. "I am certain you will save us."

Deeply touched, he looked at me gratefully and kissed both my hands blackened by the weather, the smoke, and the mushroom juice. My gloves had been torn and lost long before. The boy hugged and kissed his father, who now talked cheerfully and made plans.

"I'll go into the first house I come across. . . ."

"You'll frighten them; they'll take you for a bandit," the boy joked him.

"Really?" my husband asked me anxiously. "Do I look very alarming?"

"You are rather a sight, but you look more like a tramp than a bandit. I think they'll take pity on you and not be afraid."

"Well, I'll go in, ask what the village is called, tell them about our hut. . . ."

"But they won't understand you," the boy said doubtfully.

"I'll draw it all: the river, the felled trees, the hut, you and your mother. Then I'll ask where the shop is where I can buy some food."

"How can you? You have no money."

My husband looked at me questioningly.

"Take my wedding-ring, they may give you something in exchange."

"Good. Besides, it will be a proof that I am not a tramp.

And you," said he, turning to the boy, "give me your notebook and photograph."

It was the boy's last photograph, taken just before we set out. A round healthy little face; only a shadow of it was left now—sweet, touching, and dreadfully pitiable.

"Now let us put down in your diary on which day I go. What is the date to-day?"

We could not reckon it up at once. The last few days of fatigue and anxiety seemed merged into one. We set out on our journey on 8th August. We would remember that day all our lives. We had been sixteen days on the way. How many more days would the journey take us? How many more days had we to live at all?

"What may I take with me? How much sugar have we left?"

"Ten lumps," said I, though we really had only seven.

"I'll take one."

"Nonsense, you must take at least two."

"But I'll get to a house and have something to eat before you do."

"Mind you get a good meal, Daddy."

After many protests on his part, I cut for him a piece of bacon that could not have weighed more than two ounces. I was beginning to lose patience.

"Everything depends on your getting there, and you make all this fuss. We'll be all right here."

"But I can manage for several days without food. I've done it often enough in the camp. I don't want anything except perhaps some salt. Have you any to spare?"

"Yes," I answered firmly, scraping together two teaspoonsful, of which I gave him one.

There was nothing more to give him.

He was in a hurry to get off. It was a terrible moment when the father, pale, thin, with a dishevelled beard, discoloured by the sun, and hands covered with burns and bruises, gave a last hug to the boy. The child looked very frail there were dark hollows round his eyes and his lips were white and drawn.

"Good-bye, Daddy! Come back soon, Daddy!"

"How many days shall we wait?" I asked the dreadful question.

"Five: three days to get there, and two days back; the journey back will not take so long."

"I shall wait six. What shall I do then?"

"Make bonfires in the clearing, perhaps some one will see the smoke. . . . I will come back. Good-bye."

He went away. We stood looking after him till he disappeared among the trees. The place was strange without him—still and empty. The forest seemed bigger and we felt smaller and more helpless.

"What shall we do, Mother?" the boy asked sadly.

"Let us lie down and put our feet in the sun, that's the best way to heal the wounds. When Daddy comes back we shall have to walk again. And we must put everything in order, we shall be here a long time."

"Let us make it look like a room!" said the boy wistfully. Poor child, how he longed for something like a home! He was delighted when we put on the shelf his little clock with a luminous face, by which he had learned as a baby to recognise the hour of eight at which he was allowed to get up and make a noise. We also had with us a china cup and three silver spoons. Our provisions—five lumps of sugar, a tiny piece of bacon, two or three ounces of rice, and a teaspoonful of salt were carefully packed in an oilcloth bag and hidden in the corner to keep them safe from any animals that might stray into the hut in our absence.

Though it was morning the boy soon went to sleep, and I sat beside him, thinking. He had often lain like this, struggling against serious illness, while I sat by him watching for the least gesture or movement to tell me how he was. He had his own way of being ill: the greater the danger he was in, the more sweet and patient he was. Once he reduced to tears the doctor who had to operate on him. It was the same thing now: he lay on the ground with an empty sack under his head, sadly and quietly. He had given up for his father's freedom all that he held dear in his childish life, and now he was at death's door.

The sun was warming his sore feet; on the heel there was the scar from the abscess, not quite healed yet, and broken water blisters were festering. No, he certainly could not have walked any farther.

I had to go and pick some berries, though I was hardly able to pull on my boots, my feet hurt me so. In the forest I suddenly felt horribly depressed. I seemed to hear my husband's voice, a groan, and some mysterious distant music.

"Mother! Mother!" It was the boy calling me pitifully.

"What is it, dear? I am here."

"Mother, come here, I feel rather miserable."

I came back and made a hot drink of whortleberries and red bilberries.

"I wish we had gone with Daddy! I am quite rested and could have walked slowly.

"It was better for him to go alone," was all I could say. After a hot drink he went to sleep again, with a tired look on his little face.

I had to pick some mushrooms for supper. It was a good thing that the berries and the mushrooms grew quite close to the hut.

How long the hours were! I seemed to be conscious of every minute passing and falling like a heavy drop into the past.

"Mother! Mother! Where have you gone to again?"

"Only to pick some mushrooms, darling. Lie still; I am quite close to you."

"I feel very miserable."

"Sing."

He began to sing. This had been his chief comfort during the last few days: he would sit down, hugging his knees, and sing all his school songs, then the Red Army songs. Now he sang with special feeling the melodramatic songs that beggar boys sing in suburban trains:

"Soon soon I'll be dead,  
They will bury me,  
No one will know  
Where my grave shall be.  
No one will know,  
No one will come.  
But in the early spring  
The sweet nightingale  
Will come and sing."

"Mother, I've sung them all."

I had to return.

"Would you like to help me to clean the mushrooms?"

"No, I'd rather not. May I lie closer to you?"

"Do."

It was not very convenient for getting on with my job, but I was glad to feel his head pressed against my side.

"Now you must stir the soup and look after the fire, and I'll go to fetch some more wood, or we'll freeze in the night."

There were lots of logs and branches lying about. I brought in heaps and heaps of them, badly scratching my hands,

but I knew that all this burned very quickly : the chief thing was to find two tree trunks that would keep the fire going all night. At first I thought I could not move them at all ; then I dragged them for two paces and fell down, but eventually they were in the hut, though my arms and legs were trembling with the effort. Our supper was ready, but the boy could not swallow more than two or three spoonfuls.

" I can't eat ; it makes me rather sick."

" Here's a little salt for you ; put it on your palm and when you begin to feel bad, have a lick."

" Right. Yes, it tastes quite good."

We got through our supper in this way and the boy went to sleep. Now I understood what keeping up a fire through the night means ! At first the branches caught quickly, throwing off a tremendous heat, and I dropped asleep, overcome by the warmth ; then the fire died down, the cold of the night crept nearer and nearer, but I had not the strength to wake up. At last, when I opened my eyes, it was dark, bright stars were shining in the clear sky, the burnt branches showed black, and the two tree trunks underneath crackled, sending up pungent white smoke. I had to make haste and put some more on ; the branches were all tangled into a heap, and if I put on too many I could not blow up the fire. I felt very sorry for myself, but could not give up the job because the boy was shivering in his sleep. I broke up some twigs, shovelled the hot embers under them, put branches at the top and blew, and blew, and blew. The white ashes flew about in flakes, clouds of white smoke rose up, two or three tongues of pale orange flame showed through the smoke and the whole heap blazed up suddenly.

That sort of thing went on all night, almost every half-hour.

How I longed for morning, sunshine, and steady warmth ! Meanwhile, in the cold light of the moon everything sparkled with silvery hoar-frost.

Our second day began late—the child did not wake till nine, having gone to sleep at seven the evening before. I had burnt up all my supplies of firewood, my hands were black and grey, but, anyway, the boy had been warm while he slept.

" I wonder where Daddy is now ? " he said with a sigh as soon as he woke up. " I could have walked all right to-day."

But when I made him wash himself and then put him out in the sun, he dropped asleep again.

The second, the third, and the fourth days were exactly like the first.

The next day would be the sixth since my husband left. If he did not return, we should have to set off after midday. What should I say to the boy? How could we go, knowing that his father had perished?

The boy was the first to wake up that morning.

"Will Daddy come back to-day, Mother?"

"I don't know, dear; perhaps to-morrow."

"You know, we have one lump of sugar left? Don't let us eat it till Daddy comes back."

"Very well."

"Only, please, Mother, don't go away."

"But I must pick some berries to make our tea."

"Then I'll stand by the hut and sing, and you answer me."

"All right."

I wandered about and he stood by the hut and sang. His clear voice echoed down the river, and sometimes I called back to him.

He called to me once:

"Mother, listen, there are voices!"

"No, darling, it's your fancy."

During those days we had heard voices, and singing, and music, but it was all an hallucination.

"Please, don't go away, Mother," he said anxiously.

"I'll come to you in a minute. I'll only pick the bilberries under that pine tree."

I went a little way, to hear the better. Voices. Loud men's voices. It was not he. If it had been he, he would have let us know by calling in his own special way.

"Mother!" the child cried with all his might.

I was already running to the hut.

Two men in military uniform were coming out of the forest at a quick pace. But where was *he*? There! He was staggering, his face looked dreadful, black and swollen, and there was some dry blood near the nose.

"Darling, darling!" We held his hands again, the boy was kissing and stroking him.

He sank helplessly on the logs without looking at us.

"Dearest, what has happened?"

"I had a fall and hurt myself. Give me some water."

"Here, Daddy, have a drink. Mother will make tea directly; we saved up one teaspoonful and a lump of sugar."

"They have a little with them," he said, speaking with



difficulty, pointing to one of the Finnish frontier guards, who were looking at us somewhat disconcerted. "They wouldn't let me buy any food—they said they'd take plenty, but they have eaten most of it themselves."

"What does it matter? The chief thing is that we are saved. All will be well."

"It took me two days to get there, though I had nothing to eat and my boots had fallen to pieces. They thought they would walk quicker than I did, but I could scarcely drag them here! They took three days on the way."

Naturally, they could not walk like a man who is trying to save all that he holds dear in life.

There was a rattle in his throat, he coughed, and fresh blood showed on his handkerchief that was already stained with red.

"I hurt myself when I fell," he said guiltily.

"Was the journey difficult?"

"Very. A lot of stones."

The boy hugged and kissed his father and was almost in tears. He could not understand what the matter was—why was Daddy so strange, as though he weren't glad.

Meanwhile the Finns cooked some oatmeal porridge. They shared it with us in a brotherly way and also gave each of us a piece of black bread. It is curious that only the taste of real food makes one understand how hungry one is. We felt that we could have sat there eating for a long, long time. But the porridge was soon gone.

"How are your feet? Can you walk?" my husband asked. "Their provisions are coming to an end; we'll have to hurry."

"Yes, we can walk all right. Our feet are much better."

I was sorry my husband could not have a day's rest in the hut before setting out again, but there was nothing for it.

Now the Finns walked in front, carefully preparing the way—chopping off branches and placing tree-trunks across streams. The boy walked behind them, and my husband and I came last. I was afraid that he would fall, he was so weak.

When we were among the thick elm and willow bushes some five hundred yards away from the hut, my husband asked me:

"Did one of you sing?"

"Yes. The boy sang, and I answered him."

"Just at this spot I heard your voices, but I thought it

was my fancy. I had imagined so many times that I heard you talking and singing. But this time it was wonderfully clear. These men had been making difficulties since yesterday; they were frightened and decided that I was a Bolshevik, leading them into a trap. This morning they gave me two hours: if we did not reach the hut within that time they would turn back and make me go with them or kill me. Two hours had passed and they began to bar my way. And suddenly I heard a voice: it was the boy singing. Then the wind carried it away. I lost my head completely and started to run towards the sound. I fell, scrambled on to my feet, and ran again. They would certainly have shot me, but then they too heard the voice. I was in such an agony of despair that I am not myself yet. . . . Had they turned back you would have both perished. You could never have found your way alone, and to-day is the sixth day, so you would have concluded that I was dead. And indeed I would have been dead, for I certainly would not have turned back alive. I've never lived through anything more terrible. . . . Now they will lead us to safety; but I can't get over it yet."

"You will, in time," said I. "The only thing that matters is that you have saved us."

# THE WORK OF A TRAITOR

By

E. M. WILMOT-BUXTON

*In the reign of Elizabeth, Catholics were not regarded with favour, and as relations with Spain were strained, the Jesuit monks, being a Spanish order, were especially under the ban. Nevertheless, in 1588, Father Gerard, a Lancashire-born Jesuit priest, landed again in England to minister to those of his faith. This account, written by a man who admires the devotion and fearlessness displayed by these priests during a period of personal danger, gives a vivid picture of religious intolerance in the sixteenth century*

IT was not long after Sir Thomas Gerard had been released from prison that Father Gerard, in the hope of helping him to return to the right path, managed to pay a visit to the home of his childhood.

He had in the meantime been busier than ever. He had been staying at Losell with his young host and recent convert, Henry Drury, and there he had brought into the Church a crowd of converts, fathers and mothers, gallant young men, eager maidens.

After about two years of this kind of work, Father Gerard began to cast a wider net. And first of all he tried to do something to banish the shadow that still lay dark upon his own family.

So he arrived one night at Etwall with three young converts, all his devoted friends, who were received with open arms by Lady Gerard. The visit, however, had a very sad side. The very presence of his son, the eager conversation of his friends about Catholic affairs, and their obvious enthusiasm for their new-found faith were as gall and vinegar to their unwilling host.

So the visit was cut short, and Father Gerard writes sadly

in his diary : " I had to pass through my native place, and through the midst of my kindred and acquaintance ; but I could not do much good there, though there were many who professed themselves great friends of mine. I experienced, in fact, most fully that saying of Truth himself, that no prophet is received in his own country ; so that I felt little wish to linger among them."

From thence he went on to stay with his uncle, Nicholas Gerard, and on his arrival found him in his hunting coat and breeches, about to start on a stag hunt.

" Welcome, Father," said he eagerly, taking him aside from a crowd of friends. " Have you forgotten how to ride to hounds ? "

" Not I," said Father Gerard ; " but surely you don't expect me to accompany you just now ? "

" I do indeed. There is a man here who has married a cousin of ours, and no man but you, I think, can win him to the true Faith. Come with us, then, and get into touch with him as you ride along the course."

" But surely some other occasion would be more fit," demurred the priest.

" Not at all," replied his zealous kinsman. " Take the chance while you have it. You may never get so near him again."

" Give me a horse and I am ready," said Father Gerard.

It was really rather a wonderful hunt for souls. During the chase he joined company with this man, Francis Fenner, and presently, when the hounds were at fault and had ceased to give tongue, Father Gerard began to " follow his own chase and give tongue himself in good earnest." He began to speak of the pains men took in chasing a poor animal, and quickly turned the conversation to the need of gaining an everlasting kingdom, and the care and industry needed to gain it. " For truly," said he, with a smile, " the devil on his part never sleeps, but hunts after our souls as hounds after their prey."

" Are you a Catholic then ? " asked Fenner uneasily.

" I rejoice to say that I am," said the priest, and added quickly : " I think that you, too, are not far from that faith."

" I am no heretic," said the man. " I go to this new-fangled service of the State to save trouble and the harass of the fine "

" Yet you are ready enough to take trouble over this business of a hunt, nay, even to endure much discomfort in it," laughed Father Gerard, fastening his cloak against a heavy

storm of rain and wind that had arisen. "Is there, do you think, no sport in holding the true Faith against a crowd of persecutions? Why, man, you are not so keen as yonder hounds, who will not be beaten back from the stag by the whips of the huntsmen."

To this Fenner said nothing, and the two rode on together in silence. But as Father Gerard was about to bid him farewell at the end of the day's work, Fenner took his hand and asked very earnestly if he might come and see him on the following day.

"With the greatest pleasure, dear fellow," answered Gerard; "and may you one day ride bravely into the true Church as you have ridden to hounds to-day."

Before the week was over Francis Fenner was received into the Church, of which he became a most enthusiastic member. It was some time before Father Gerard came across him again, but he heard of him as one who was always ready to take risks in the matter of supporting and harbouring priests, and at last, being in his neighbourhood, he went to call upon him. He was received with the utmost joy by his convert; and presently, as they sat together in Fenner's library, the latter said:

"I have lately had a very strange experience, Father, which I should like you to hear. I once went to visit a friend who was sick in bed. As I knew him to be an upright man and one under a delusion rather than in wilful error, I began to instruct him in the Faith, and I pressed him at the same time to look to his soul as his illness was dangerous. I at last prevailed with him, and was myself prevailed upon by the sick man to send for the priest to hear his confession.

"Accordingly, after instructing the invalid how meanwhile to stir up in himself sorrow for his sins and make ready for his confession, I went away. I went back to my own house to find a priest, but there was not one at home at the time, and I had some difficulty in finding one. In the meantime the sick man died, but evidently with a great desire for confession; for he repeatedly asked whether that friend of his—meaning myself—was coming who had promised to bring a physician with him, under which name priests often visit the sick. What followed seemed to show that his desire had stood him in good stead. Every night after his death there appeared to his wife, in her bed-chamber, a sort of light flickering through the air, and sometimes entering between the curtains. She was frightened, and ordered her maids to bring their beds within the room and

stay with her. They, however, saw nothing—their mistress alone saw the appearance every night and was troubled at it.

"At last she sent for me, disclosed the whole cause of her fear, and asked me to consult some learned man. I asked a priest's advice, who answered that very probably this light meant that she should come to the light of faith. I returned with the answer and won her over.

"The widow, on becoming a Catholic, had Mass said in the same room for a long time, but still the same light appeared every night.

"This increased her trouble, so that the priest consulted other priests, and brought back an answer to the widow that probably her husband's soul was on the way to heaven by reason of his true conversion of heart and contrition, accompanied with a desire of the sacrament, but still he stood in need of prayers to free him from his debts to God's justice. He bade her therefore have Mass said for him thirty days, according to the old custom of the country. She took the advice and herself communicated several times for the same intention. The night after the last Mass had been celebrated in the room she saw three lights instead of one as before. Two of them seemed to hold and support the third between them. All three entered within the bed curtains, and after staying there a little while, mounted up towards heaven, through the top of the bed, leaving the lady in great consolation. Now what think you, Father, was the meaning of all that?"

"I have no doubt," said Father Gerard, who had listened with close attention to this story, "that the soul had then been freed from its pains and carried by the angels into glory."

It was not long after Father Gerard had heard this strange ghost story that he set out to the house of a lady named Mistress Anne Vaux, a most ardent Catholic, who had offered her house in Warwickshire as a meeting-place, where Father Garnet, the Superior of the Jesuits, might meet some of the priests of his Society, together with a few laymen from the district.

Although he rejoiced to see his spiritual sons, Father Garnet was very anxious as to their safety; for their numbers were larger than was at all prudent, and there were not enough hiding-places to go round. During the conference he was careful to conceal his nervousness, but directly it was over he warned them earnestly of their danger and begged them not to linger without necessity, saying: "I will not guarantee your safety any longer."

So directly dinner was over most of them mounted their

horses and rode off; but five Jesuits and two secular priests who were of the company stayed behind, and after talking late into the night, betook themselves to the beds prepared for them.

Rising very early in the dark October morning, they went to the chapel, where, at five o'clock, Father Southwell was just beginning to say his Mass. The rest were at meditation when Father Gerard heard a bustle at the house door. A moment after, cries and oaths directed against the servant, who was evidently refusing admittance to some one, were heard by all.

"Flee for your lives," cried Father Gerard, who had looked from a window that commanded the front door. "I can see four pursuivants, with drawn swords, trying to break down the door and force a way in."

Fortunately the servant, a big, strong fellow, was able to keep them at bay for a time, or they must all have been taken in the deadly crime of saying and assisting at Mass. In an incredibly short time Father Southwell had taken off his vestments and stripped the altar, while the rest hastily collected anything that was lying about that might have betrayed the presence of a priest.

"Don't leave your boots and swords about," cried Father Southwell, "or they will guess that there are many of us here, although none of us appear."

Then Father Gerard remembered with dismay that their beds were still warm and showed evident signs of having been slept in. "Come along," he cried, "let's turn up the cold side of the beds that the rascals may be put off the scent."

While they were doing this they could actually hear the replies of the servant to the shouting and bawling outside. "My mistress is not up—this is no time to expect her to meet you. She will be down ere long and will then give you her answer."

And while he said this over and over again the priests were hurriedly stowing themselves away with their baggage into a cleverly contrived hiding-place.

At last the "leopards," as Father John used to call them, were let in. They raged about the house, looking everywhere, and prying into the darkest corners with candles. For four hours they searched, while the priests in their hiding-place, which was an underground passage inside a double wall of the cellar, listened to their tappings and pokings with considerable interest. At last, in despair, they took themselves off.

Their hiding-place was by no means an ideal retreat, for the floor was covered with water; and though some of the older

men found a dry footing on a little ledge, Father Gerard and Father Southwell were standing all the time with water up to their knees.

"Surely it is safe now to leave this den," said Father Gerard at last, but Father Garnet shook his head.

"When you have been in as many priest hunts as I have, my son," he said, "you will know that one of their favourite devices is to appear to leave the premises they have been searching, and then suddenly to return and catch their prey in the act of emerging. We shall do well to leave it all to Mistress Anne Vaux, and to stay where we are until she summons us."

After what seemed a very long time to the prisoners, Mistress Anne called down that all was safe, and summoned, as Father Gerard said, "not one but many Daniels out of the lions' den."

After this narrow escape they delayed no longer in that place, but dispersed as quickly as possible on their different ways.

About the end of the year 1593 it became necessary for Father Gerard to get into close touch with certain Catholics in London, and for this purpose his good friend, Mr. William Wiseman, began to look about for a convenient house in town to which both he and the priest might resort in time of need.

It so happened that such an abode, a white house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, was owned by a certain John Frank, who had been in the service of Mr. Wiseman's brother. When the latter left England he recommended Frank to his brother, and though he was neither a Catholic nor a regular servant of the house, he very quickly won the affection and confidence of the whole household. Father Gerard himself trusted him as the others did, though he was careful never to let himself be seen as a priest by him, and he readily agreed when it was suggested that Frank's house in Lincoln's Inn Fields would form a convenient lodging for himself and his host when they went up to town.

But this John Frank was not only a traitor, but a very clever spy. He had quickly guessed by the deference that Wiseman paid his visitor that "Mr. Thomson" was a priest, and at once began to watch his movements most carefully all the time he was pretending to serve him. And he only suggested the use of his house in order to betray both him and the family who had so generously received and trusted him.



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About the end of the year 1593 it became necessary for Father Gerard to get into close touch with certain Catholics in London, and for this purpose his good friend, Mr. William Wiseman, began to look about for a convenient house in town to which both he and the priest might resort in time of need.

It so happened that such an abode, a white house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, was owned by a certain John Frank, who had been in the service of Mr. Wiseman's brother. When the latter left England he recommended Frank to his brother, and though he was neither a Catholic nor a regular servant of the house, he very quickly won the affection and confidence of the whole household. Father Gerard himself trusted him as the others did, though he was careful never to let himself be seen as a priest by him, and he readily agreed when it was suggested that Frank's house in Lincoln's Inn Fields would form a convenient lodging for himself and his host when they went up to town.

But this John Frank was not only a traitor, but a very clever spy. He had quickly guessed by the deference that Wiseman paid his visitor that "Mr. Thomson" was a priest, and at once began to watch his movements most carefully all the time he was pretending to serve him. And he only suggested the use of his house in order to betray both him and the family who had so generously received and trusted him.

For this he had every opportunity, for he was constantly going to and fro between town and the house at North End, where old Mrs. Wiseman and her son both lived, and where Father Gerard was a frequent visitor.

But fortunately Father Gerard had a servant of his own at this time—Richard Fulwood, or Little Richard, as his master affectionately used to call him in reference to his unusual height—who, with his brother, was ready to die if need be for the young priest, and who was always on the look-out to protect him from danger.

One day this man came privately to Father Gerard and said very earnestly : “ Father, I entreat you to give up your plan of going to live in the house of John Frank.”

“ Why ? Do you know anything against him ? ” asked the priest.

“ I can prove nothing,” was the answer, “ and I would rather not say what I suspect. But I know of a house in Goldings Lane that will serve your purpose quite as well, and you will never regret the other.”

“ Well, I will talk it over with Mr. Wiseman,” said Father Gerard ; but he added : “ Remember, Richard, that Frank is a trusted servant of the family, and you would have to bring very good reasons forward before Mr. Wiseman would believe anything against him.”

By this time it was well known that Father Gerard was a man marked down by the Government for capture, and already there was more than one blood-hound upon his scent. Towards the end of that year a miserable priest, then in prison for his faith, had tried to win his own freedom by offering to track down and betray the now notorious young Jesuit. But before his offer could be accepted the capture of Father Gerard had very nearly come about in another way.

The Widow Wiseman, as she was generally known, was one of those courageous souls who were ready to run any risk rather than give up the exercises of their religion. She kept in her house an old priest named Father Brewster, who on the morning of St. Stephen's Day was about to say Mass in her little chapel when the alarm was given that the pursuivants were at hand.

A Christmas gathering of relations and friends was still staying in the house. This included the youngest son, Robert, a niece, the younger Mrs. Wiseman and her daughter Mary, a Doctor and Mrs. Carnedge, a few other friends, and three or four men-servants, fervent Catholics, who were all present in

the chapel when the signal was given. But, as it happened, neither Father Gerard nor his servant Richard was in the house. There was no time even to hide the altar vessels or the vestments. Robert Wiseman seized the bewildered and reluctant old priest and placed him almost by force within a tiny chamber made in the chimney of the great hall. Scarcely had he closed the sliding door than three or four shouting and bullying fellows entered the gate and were for a moment checked by the dignified figure and indignant expostulations of the white-haired mistress of the house. But in a few minutes the noise and confusion began again, while the men-servants stood by in sardonic silence and the maids cowered in the background.

"A pretty pass we are come to!" cried Mrs. Wiseman when she could make her voice heard above the din. "May I not even hold a party of my own relations at Christmas-time but that we are all hauled out of our beds at this hour of the morning to wait upon your pleasure?"

"You were already out of your beds for an unlawful purpose," said one of the men, pointing to the vestments and vessels that were lying about the floor of the chapel. "All you can do now is to tell us where you have hidden your priest. We know that the man Gerard is somewhere here and you may as well give him up at once."

"You are utterly mistaken," said the old lady. "But I give you leave to find him if you are so sure about it."

So the search began; but fortunately in vain, and the pursuivants had to be content with carrying off the men of the party for further examination, and with making a recommendation to the authorities that some strong measures be taken against the Widow Wiseman, "for that her house is the only house of resort for these wicked persons."

For the present, however, she escaped imprisonment, and was able to send away Father Brewster in the darkness of the winter night to the safer and more roomy hiding-place at her son's house at Braddocks.

None of them had the least suspicion that this affair was due to the information given by the traitor Frank, who had hoped thus to win the reward offered for the capture of Father Gerard. For a time the informer, balked in his first attempt, lay low. Meantime Father Gerard during all the next year frequently visited the house at Goldings Lane, where he often slept, ate, and made appointments with his friends and penitents. And here Frank knew he could most easily be taken.

It happened that the priest had made an arrangement on the Friday before Passion Sunday in that year to meet at the house his servant, Richard Fulwood, who, with his brother and two young men named Wallis, not only made the disguises that were so often necessary for the hunted priests, but helped in much of their work for souls.

On this particular Friday, Father Gerard had visited Father Garnet, who, as he was about to depart, said suddenly to him : " Long John, I wish you would stay the night with me."

" Impossible, Father," he replied. " I have to be at Goldings Lane to keep an appointment with Dick Fulwood and the other trusty helpers there."

" Nevertheless I wish you would stay. Yes, if necessary I will make it a matter of obedience. I have no reason to give you, only a very strong feeling that this night you would be safer in my house."

Very reluctantly the priest obeyed, and before many hours were over he realised the truth of the old priest's foreboding.

For all London was in " hurly-burly " that night, owing to one of the sudden and causeless panics that arose from time to time against Catholics. A general search was made in all Catholic houses, and every stranger was seized and shut up in the churches till he could be examined next day. In the course of this search they came to the little house in Goldings Lane. Dick Fulwood was the first to hear their approach, and guessed that they were after Father Gerard, who he expected every moment would appear. With the idea of putting them off the scent, he hastily put on a suit of Father Gerard's lay clothes, and when they burst open the door was at once found, as he intended he should be, in the act of hiding in a cupboard under the stairs.

With a shout of joy they rushed upon him, making sure that he was the man they sought. They had got the description of the priest from Frank, but Dick would have passed anywhere for a gentleman, and was not unlike the Father in build and appearance. Along with him they caught another fish, and no small one either. A certain John Bolt had been for some years living at the Court of the Queen, where he was in great request owing to his beautiful voice and skill in music. This young man happened to meet Father Gerard one day, and after much talk with him felt a strong wish to become a Catholic. One night he stole away from the Court and came to Father Gerard to be reconciled. The Queen, it is said, was

so furious at his loss that she flung her slipper at the head of the master of music for not looking better after him. From that time he made his abode among Catholics as much as possible, and as he was always very popular, and a delightful companion, he was never at a loss for a home and protection.

This man, together with Dick Fulwood, his brother, "Lazy John," and two servants, Suffield and Tarbock, was arrested and brought before the Council to be examined. It was only owing to the influence of his many friends that John Bolt escaped the torture and managed to escape to Louvain, where he became a priest and master of music at St. Monica's Convent till his death. The two Wallis brothers remained in hiding.

When they found that they had not got hold of Father Gerard, the magistrates determined to get up a case against Mr. Wiseman on the charge of harbouring priests at the house in Goldings Lane.

In this, however, they were balked, for the four men were absolutely loyal to their master, and would say nothing, even under threat of torture, to prove that the house belonged to Mr. Wiseman.

Then the magistrates determined to catch the latter by a cruel trick. They sent him a message supposed to come from Father Gerard, asking that he would meet the latter at Goldings Lane. Knowing nothing of what had happened there, Wiseman went straight to the house on his arrival in London, in order to keep the appointment. Coming to the house, he knocked at the door, which was at once opened to him by two pursuivants, who had been left behind in the house in order to watch for any Catholics that might come before all got scent of the danger. It was all over in a moment, and Mr. Wiseman found himself a prisoner in their hands. He was at once brought before the magistrates.

"How many priests do you keep in your house?" they asked. "Who are they? When did you last see the man Gerard?"

"I cannot answer all your questions at once," replied their prisoner. "Nor some of them at all. But I am ready to meet any accusation that you can bring against me on this head."

As so far they had only arrested him on suspicion, they could not bring a formal charge against him; but there was no justice for Catholics in those days, and Mr. Wiseman found himself



in prison without a trial, and cut off entirely from all his acquaintance, with one exception. The traitor Frank was allowed to visit him, and still pretended to be his most devoted servant.

Meantime the searchers in the house at Goldings Lane had made another discovery. In a secret hiding-place underneath the floor they found the brothers Wallis, who came forth laughing and joking, as though the whole matter was a good jest. They were at once hauled before the magistrates, where they showed a fearlessness that was oddly baffling to the authorities.

"Have you been present at Mass?" they asked, and the younger replied:

"Yes, indeed, whenever I get a chance! I dearly love a Mass, and have heard many, as well in Queen Mary's time as in her present Majesty's."

"Be you a Seminarist or a Jesuit?" they asked suspiciously, to which he replied:

"Oh, lord, no! I am not learned. I would to God I were worthy to carry their shoes."

Seeing that he laughed and appeared to be very gay, they asked peevishly the reason. To which he answered that he was so glad that they had made a search that night when he happened by chance to be present, for now he had a chance of suffering something for his religion.

The brother of this brave little fellow was a Catholic at heart, though, being questioned, he said he did not refuse to go to the "heretics' church." Both of them proved entirely loyal to the priest and to Mr. Wiseman, and would say nothing against them, even under threat of torture.

Although they now had Dick Fulwood and Wiseman in their clutches, the authorities were by no means satisfied at the result of their raid on Goldings Lane. For the real criminal was still at large, and no doubt laughing at their disappointment.

Meantime Father Gerard, hearing that the house had been raided and his host thrown into prison, had gone to Braddocks to see Wiseman's wife and friends and to settle what had best be done for him. He had meant to stay there only a day or two and then to go into hiding at once; but the desolate little household was most unwilling to let him go.

"Stay with us for Holy Week and Easter, Father," entreated Mrs. Wiseman. "Think what it will mean for us with William in prison and we ourselves left without a chance of the Sacraments. We can hide you here, and if a message

should come to you from my husband, it is here it will come, and Frank will be the one to bring it."

"Well, I will gladly stay, my child," replied the priest, though he knew that the risk of staying in a suspected house was great.

Sure enough, about the middle of Holy Week John Frank appeared, with many protestations of grief at the fate that had overtaken his master, and two letters for "Mr. Thomson." One of these was from Wiseman, giving details of his examination and of all that had befallen him.

This letter, as a matter of fact, had been read by the magistrates, but they allowed it to pass in order that Frank might know for certain whether Father Gerard was in the house.

The second letter was from "Little Richard," and brought news of the utmost importance. For he told the priest that so far he and the rest had betrayed nothing, and that he was safe from having any definite charge brought against him. He went on to describe the filthy cell in which he lay, or rather sat, for there was no bed, and nothing but a little verminous straw upon the floor of stone. "However," he ended gaily, "I sit upon the window-sill and expect every day to be examined by torture, when I shall, no doubt, be warm enough."

Much moved, Father Gerard read part of this letter aloud in Frank's presence to Mrs. Wiseman, and exclaimed at this point: "I wish I could bear some of his tortures for him, so that there might be less for him to endure."

These words were afterwards brought against him at his own trial, and gave the first proof that Frank had betrayed him, since he alone had heard them read to Mrs. Wiseman.

During the next few days the priest lay hid at Braddocks in a cleverly contrived priest's hole. But on Easter Monday, after Mass had been said and confessions heard by him on the previous days, the traitor Frank, who was still in the house, sent word to the magistrates that now was the time to trap their prey.

It was very early next day, when the little household was assembled in the chapel and Father Gerard was about to say Mass, that the sound of a tumult downstairs was heard. There was a start from Mrs. Wiseman and a frightened cry from one of her two little girls, the younger of whom was only ten years old. This was hastily silenced, and while the chapel was quickly cleared, the lady beckoned the priest to the fireplace of an upper room and, taking up the floor of loose bricks and

planks, showed him a hole just big enough for him to stand upright.

This hole, which had lately been made for the purpose, and was known to no one but the lady of the house, was partly below the chapel floor and partly below the boards of a large wainscoted room into which the chapel opened. Into this the priest sprang, and then Mrs. Wiseman, after hurriedly giving him some biscuits and a little quince jelly, replaced the bricks and planks. Had he gone to his usual hiding-place he must, as we shall see, have been discovered quite soon ; as it was, he only just had time to conceal himself in the present hole.

Scarcely had the lady quitted the room and locked the door behind her than the searchers appeared in the passage. They broke open the door of the chapel and spread through the house with great noise and racket.

Their next step was to lock up the mistress of the house with her two daughters, and the Catholic servants they kept locked up in separate rooms in one wing of the house. They then made a thorough search of the whole building, which was of a good size. They looked under the tiles of the roof, they examined the dark corners with the help of candles. Finding nothing, they began to break down certain places which they suspected. They measured the walls with long rods, so that if they did not tally they could pierce the part not accounted for. They sounded the walls and all the floors, to find out and break into any hollow places that there might be. Two days were spent quite fruitlessly in this manner.

At the end of the second day the two magistrates who were in charge decided that the priest must have gone away on Easter Day, and so they themselves departed, leaving the pursuivants to take Mrs. Wiseman, the children, and all the Catholic servants, to London to be examined.

This was the real danger, for Mrs. Wiseman knew that Father Gerard would never give himself up, and thus enable the family to be condemned to death on the charge of harbouring priests. And on the other hand she feared he would soon be starved to death in his retreat. To her relief she heard that some of the Protestant servants were to be left in charge of the house, and that Frank was to be one of them. And as she still believed him to be absolutely faithful, she hoped that he would be the means of freeing Father Gerard. She had noticed that Frank had made a great show of eagerness in withstanding the searchers, and loath as she was to let any one into the secret of the "priest's hole," she felt she must take the risk. So she



*She showed the priest a hole just big enough to stand in.*



sent for Frank and said to him : " Although I know that you are not a Catholic, Frank, I believe that you love Mr. Thomson as much as we all do, and that you will do your best to save his life and freedom."

" You may depend upon me, madam," said Frank, with a low bow.

" Well, then," said she, " I want you, after we are gone, to go privately into the room next the chapel and call out the name of Mr. Thomson twice or three times. Then speak, but not too loud, telling him that we have all been taken to prison, but that you are left to deliver him. He will then answer from behind the lath and plaster where he lies concealed."

" I will most faithfully carry out your directions, madam," said the fellow, and with that assurance she was obliged to depart.

And then a wonderful thing happened. If John Frank had at once carried out Mrs. Wiseman's instructions, Father Gerard would certainly have answered his call and fallen at once into his hands. But apparently he still hoped to hide the fact of his treachery, and with the idea of keeping himself in the background, while at the same time he pulled all the ropes, he told the pursuivants what Mrs. Wiseman had said, and left them to deal with the matter.

Directly they heard his news they sent for the magistrates, who had gone home and were by no means prepared to come back again. They insisted on having their night's rest, but very early in the morning, they arrived again at Braddocks and renewed the search. Perhaps they did not altogether pin their faith to Frank, for they made no attempt to get him to call to the priest, but contented themselves with measuring and sounding everywhere much more carefully than before, especially in the chamber next the chapel. Finding nothing, however, they decided to strip off the wainscot of that room on the next day. While they did this they set guards in the rooms near to watch all night lest the priest should escape.

Meantime Father Gerard, who had now been shut up for three days, was getting rather desperate and uncommonly hungry. He could hear from his hiding-place the password that the captain of the band gave to his men, and for a minute or two he thought of using it as a means of getting away. But he soon found that two or three fellows were on guard in the chapel and were watching the room in which the fireplace was, so that they would certainly have seen him issue from his retreat. He could hear every word they said, and presently,

to his dismay, they began to complain of the cold, and to propose that they should light a fire in the grate of the big room. The priest knew that the grate was so constructed that a fire could not be lit in it without damaging the house and discovering the hole, although, as a blind, they made a point of keeping wood there as if it were meant for a fire.

He could hear the crackling of the faggot and the voices of the men as they sat around it, and it was not long before what he expected came to pass. The bricks, which had only wood underneath them, loosened in the heat and nearly fell out of their places as the wood gave way.

When they noticed this they began to probe the place with a stick, and finding that the bottom of the hearth was not of brick but of wood, they remarked that there must be something curious about it.

Apparently, however, they were weary with their long search, and by no means inclined in the absence of their leader to begin it all over again. So they decided to put off further examination till the next day.

Faint with hunger and almost hopeless of escape, Father Gerard put his whole remaining strength that night into a prayer that he might not be taken in that house. For he knew his capture would sign the death-warrant of his friends, and though he cared nothing for his own personal safety, he was full of anxiety on their behalf.

And then the miracle happened.

Next morning they renewed the search most carefully *in every room except that in which the two watchmen had made the fire*. It seemed as though Almighty God had blotted out all remembrance of the thing from their minds. If they had made even a small attempt at a search there they must inevitably have found the priest, for the fire had burnt a great hole in his hiding-place, and had he not pressed close against the outer wall the hot cinders would have fallen upon him.

But they came there not at all, being convinced that they had got upon his track on the floor below, where as a matter of fact they did actually find his former hiding-hole. From his half-revealed lurking-place Father Gerard heard their cry of joy and also their shout of disappointment when all they found there was a goodly store of provisions. Even Frank seems to have been convinced that this was the "hole" mentioned by the mistress of the house, and now began to think that the priest must have escaped. They stuck to their purpose, however, of stripping off the wainscot of the room just below the

place where the Father actually was, and at any moment might have hit upon his refuge. For he now stood in a recess made in the thick wall of the chimney, behind a finely carved and inlaid mantelpiece; and they could not well take down the carving without breaking it. This they would not have hesitated to do if they had thought it possible that he might be there, but they did not think there could be room there for a man to sit or stand.

For an hour Father Gerard heard nothing but tappings and scrapings in the distance, and was hoping that they would soon give up the search, when suddenly he heard voices in the room above, where was the fireplace through which he had got into his hole. From the sounds it was evident that they were trying the chimney by putting a ladder up it, and climbing into it in order that they might sound it with their hammers.

"Now I am done!" said the priest to himself. "They have only to go downwards instead of upwards, and they are bound to come across me."

By this time, however, he was so hungry and weary of his confinement that except for the danger to his friends he would almost have welcomed his pursuers. But remembering the Wisemans, he breathed another ardent prayer for protection and waited breathless.

Down the big chimney the voices came quite clearly to his ears.

"Might there not be a place here for a person to get down into the wall of the chimney below, by lifting up this hearth?" said one of them.

"No," said the other. "You could not get down that way into the chimney underneath, but there might easily be an entrance at the back of this chimney."

So saying, he gave the place a kick, and Father Gerard himself could hear the hollow sound of the hole where he was.

"*But God, who set bounds to the sea, said also to their dogged obstinacy: 'Thus far shalt thou go and no farther.'*"

Incredible as it seems, the men noticed nothing amiss, and at the end of the fourth day they left the house, declaring that the priest must have escaped. A few of the Protestant servants were left in charge, amongst whom was the traitor Frank; but none of the former would have lifted a hand against "Mr. Thomson," and the latter made no attempt to do anything more in the matter, reserving his forces for another time.

As for Father Gerard, he still knew nothing of Frank's treachery. So directly he felt it was safe he emerged, very



hungry and dusty, from his hiding-place, and appeared in the highest spirits before the astonished servants as they sat at their midday meal. The voice of Frank was loudest among those who congratulated him on his escape, but even if he had thought it wise to send for the magistrates he knew it would be of no avail, for the priest only waited to have food before starting off again into a place of greater safety.

## "Q" SHIP MEETS SUBMARINE

*By*

HAROLD T. WILKINS

ONE of the most thrilling episodes of the War on the sea was that concerned with the ingenious "mystery," or "Q" ship. Its success depended on the relative inefficiency of the submarine as a fighting-machine in 1914-16, and it is scarcely likely that the "Q" ship will ever be used in any future war in which maddened humanity may engage.

Picture a dirty old collier wallowing in the straits of Dover, a few miles off the English coast, one summer afternoon in the later and desperate naval phase of the European War. Her hull was painted grey, and queerly streaked with black stripes of camouflage, and to the eye of an observer who saw a sailor in dirty clothes, with a greasy cap on the back of his head, go lounging along the deck to another man with a pipe in his mouth, she seemed as slovenly a tramp ship as ever left the port of Hull to coast along the shores of the North Sea. The man took the pipe out of his mouth, spat coolly and unconcernedly over the rails into the sea, and then very leisurely carried out the order of the officer.

A mile or two farther inshore small coasting steamers were hugging the land, and nearer still to the foot of the white chalk cliffs, a big French liner crowded with passengers, and carrying mails, churned up the sea as she hastened to the safety of Dover harbour.

Suddenly, astern of the liner, a swiftly moving white track cleft the water to ribbons. Followed a loud and terrible explosion, and clouds of white steam belched out of a great gaping hole in the hull of the big liner. She had been torpedoed by a lurking German submarine! Frantically, the French captain headed her inshore to try and beach her before she sank.

The look-out man on the dirty collier marked the track of the torpedo. Then the collier turned and steamed for the spot where the torpedo had first appeared, but the wary German "sub." had gone below. That dirty collier was quite other than the harmless merchant ship she appeared. She was a "mystery ship"—one of the British Admiralty "Q" ships meant to decoy lurking German U-boats to their doom.

The "Q" ship hung around waiting for the "sub." to show on the surface of the sea, but over the skyline came a cloud of black smoke. A torpedo-boat destroyer was coming up at full speed. The drowning liner had flashed out a radio "S O S" which had been picked up by the destroyer; but there was no sign of the enemy "sub." anywhere on the water or under the water.

An hour later, a lighthouse keeper off the Kent coast signalled that the German "sub." had risen to the surface and was swimming quietly, on the wait for another victim. The "Q" ship set off in the wake of the destroyer, but the wary "sub." at once submerged and was seen no more.

This is a true picture of the mystery ship in action at the time when Germany was getting a stranglehold on Britain by means of her submarine blockade. The British Admiralty or Navy Department were seriously alarmed by the German U-boat war on merchant shipping in the spring of 1915. Numerous plans were proposed and tried out, but with no great success. Thousands of tons of shipping continued to be sunk by the U-boats. At last, Admiral Sir Lewis Bayley, commander-in-chief off the Irish coast where the German "subs." were thickest, suggested the fitting out of three ships as decoys. The officers and men were carefully picked out, and, until they actually joined the ships, had no idea of the nature of the mission on which they were to be employed.

In ports all round the Bristol and the English Channels, tramp ships were picked out, sent round to a naval dockyard and refitted and, in October 1915, rushed off to sea to find the U-boats. Anything from a little fishing smack or small schooner to a 5000-ton liner was commandeered for the mystery service. Later, as the decoy tactics developed, the Admiralty built special convoy sloops and constructed them with the fine, free lines of merchant ships. This type of ship was at first very successful until the German "subs" grew "wise," when some other fake had to be tried.

Aboard every German "sub." was a man who knew the British coast ports well, and all types of shipping in those

waters, so that the " Q " ship had to be careful to steer a course corresponding to the type of craft she purported to be. A liner, for example, would not have to be seen in the waters of the Bristol Channel, or a collier far out at sea. By the spring of 1917, the German " subs." had grown so wise to the ways of the " Q " ships that the latter had to take torpedoes with them when they went cruising. Many months might pass before the " Q " ship sighted an enemy " sub." She ploughed out to sea to about 18° west longitude, in the track of the shipping to America, then turned and came back to an English port without seeing a conning-tower or periscope break the surface. All the time the " Q " ship was right in the track of the German " sub." and picking up wreckage and survivors of torpedoed merchant ships.

The earlier " Q " ships were fitted with guns hidden in deck-houses, or behind flaps and cunning screens. The German " sub." countered this move not by coming to the surface and shelling, but by firing torpedoes at ships without warning. The " Q " ship met the torpedoes by dispensing with coal, stiffening her bulkheads, and adding new watertight bulkheads. To increase her buoyancy, she packed her holds tightly with Canadian spruce, and in order to prevent this timber from floating out of the hatches when the ship was torpedoed, the wood was riveted to the hatches and coamings. It was this device of wood loading which made the " Q " boats successful in their war on the submarines. Otherwise, a ship would have gone to the bottom a few minutes after the striking of the torpedo. The wood kept the ship afloat several hours while the " Q " ship might kill the " sub."

Naturally, the " Q " ships were overcrowded. Men had to stop below decks for many hours, since the sight of more than the usual number of a tramp's crew would make the wary German " sub." sheer off quickly. They were at once under iron discipline, and acting the part of a free and easy and non-disciplined merchant sailorman. Of course, the " Q " ships did not have things all their own way. There came a day when the German " subs." shied away from merchantmen, any one of which might prove to be a mystery ship. The German " sub." would not approach, but torpedoed from a distance ; or, if she came to the surface, it was dead ahead or astern where no hidden guns could be brought to bear. In fact, so wary did the German " sub." become, that she would track a liner or cargo ship, in the daytime, out of sight, and then when night shut down on the sea, up she would come

to shoot ahead and fire a torpedo to sink the unsuspecting liner.

Every "Q" boat man was trained to act a part. He spoke as if he were a merchant seaman, used the same terms, swore the same oaths. On deck, indolent sailormen would be seen sauntering around while a blaspheming bo'sun—really a disguised naval petty officer—seemed to be enforcing orders with his fist. But below decks, out of sight of any nearby ship, what a contrast! Men stepped smartly along as though they were on the deck of a battleship.

German "subs" had orders to get papers and details of the ships they said they had sunk, and this meant coming closer. A reward was paid according to the tonnage of the ships sunk. This near approach often proved fatal to the "sub." As the "sub." came nearer the mystery ship, the watcher in the "sub.'s" conning-tower saw a "panic party" rush helter-skelter on the deck and create a scene of terror and confusion. They tumbled into the ship's boats as they were lowered, then clambered out again to fetch some valued possession forgotten in the confusion of the flight. Then, in a slovenly manner, the grimy crew pulled away from the sinking ship to act another part. They lay on their oars a few hundred yards away from the ship apparently to see the last of the poor old tub, in reality to wait for the rising of the submerged German "sub."

Up came the German "sub.," training machine guns on them and ordering them to move away. They disregarded his orders and rowed nearer to the sinking ship, to lure the "sub." closer in to the hidden guns. If in the road of their own guns, the panic crew had orders to jump overboard as so not to prevent the sinking of the "sub."

Sometimes the acting was overdone, and the boats upset, tumbling the "panic-stricken" crew into the water. All this time, below decks, hidden under screens, the mystery ship's fighting men were standing by the guns waiting for the uprising of the "sub." and her coming within range. Now the panic party would pull back to the sinking ship as if to reboard her, whereon the "sub." commander grew furious, opening his conning-tower, manned his guns, and ordered that panic party to stop it. Behind his watching post, at the back of a dummy ventilator, the "Q" ship captain saw all that was happening.

Before shelling started from the "sub." the mystery ship's cookie had orders to go on deck and pour over the side a

bucket of slush to show the " sub." that nobody cared whether he fired or not. On one occasion cookie poured his bucket of slush full on the face of a " Q " ship man leaning over the rail and smoking with a pipe in his mouth. Cookie was very realistically collared and kicked on deck by the suffering man.

The mystery ship used a number of ingenious fakes in action. There was a device to imitate shell fire. Tin canisters containing explosives were placed all round the ship. When the " sub." let fire and a shell fell near, these canisters blew out smoke and gases to create the illusion that the " sub." had scored a direct hit, and had the correct range. Then steampipes were laid all round the engine-room hatchways. When dense clouds of steam blew up from these faked pipes or the whistle over the engine, the " sub " would think he had hit a vital part of the ship's engine-room and machinery. To make him think he had set the ship afire, there was a smoking tub filled with dried seaweed.

The German " sub." knew there was a hidden control somewhere on the " Q " ship, so he aimed for it, but he might overlook a dual control forward looking like a harmless reel or drum of wire rope, or consisting of a periscope hidden in a stove stackpipe. One " Q " ship captain dressed a seaman as a handsome girl and made " her " sit in a prominent position on the poop in a deck-chair, carry a " dummy baby " in order to lure the German " sub."

The captain of another " Q " ship—of which there were then about 130—asked the Admiralty to supply him with thirty pretty girls for his decks. It does not appear that he wanted a harem—although, as it was said, no one would " put it past " some fellows at sea—but desired a decoy to draw the woman-hungry U-boats nearer to him. The Admiralty sent him about forty men dressed as handsome girls from the waist up to their bonny heads. Whether the Germans fell for this bait is not known.

Another officer made a dummy parrot in a cage, and handed it over to the panic party to heighten the illusion of pathetic sailormen rescuing their last possession. Finally, there was the mystery ship's " Board of Lies," containing faked ports of departure and destination, dates, tonnage, all changed each day. Each man aboard the " Q " ship had to memorise these details so that the Germans would hear the same story from all hands.

One spring morning, in 1917, a dirty tramp steamer was ploughing her way along the steam lane to New York, with a

stiff breeze blowing and a sea running. The officer of the watch turned to a corner of the bridge and spotted a low object far down on the skyline. He looked through his glasses and saw it was a "sub.'s" periscope. The captain came up on to the bridge (wheelhouse) and they both looked through binoculars, when the periscope suddenly vanished. It was that of a German "sub." a long way off.

Rattlers or signals of warning were sounded and the gun crews called to their action stations. On deck, the watch strained their eyes to see what would happen. There was reason to think the "sub." had sighted the tramp before she submerged.

Twenty minutes later, the look-out on the wheelhouse sighted a disturbance in the water. It was the track of a torpedo coming straight for the bow end of the ship. The helm was put hard over, and the torpedo missed the ship by about six feet. Once again a periscope broke the surface of the water. The "sub." had been watching the result of the firing of the torpedo and now rose to the surface right astern of the tramp steamer.

On the deck of the "Q" ship, hidden in a gun-shed astern, an officer watched through a crack while a long hull with a conning-tower forged through the water towards the ship. The "sub." was now steaming fast to take up a position on the "Q" ship's starboard, four miles away. A flash shot from the "sub.," followed by an explosion and the whine of a shell which hit the water with a great splash behind the "Q" ship.

Now the "Q" ship started to zigzag and steamed full speed to avoid the torpedoes. Her manœuvre was intended to lure the "sub." nearer to her own guns. A tornado of shells fell hissing in the water all around the tramp. One shell pierced the "Q" ship's hull and hit the timber packed for buoyancy. At once sea water rushed into the hold, and a sailor with a rope round his waist was detailed to go over the side and plug up the hole. Fragments of shrapnel strewed the "Q" ship's decks, but the "sub." would come no nearer.

Seeing this, the "Q" ship's captain decided to show *his* hidden teeth! A buzzer signalled the gun crew to stand by, a bell rang and away fell the flaps from the concealed guns. A salvo of shells spurted out from the "Q" ship's battery but fell short of the "sub." The gunners now got the range and a broadside followed. A "Q" ship officer looked through his glasses and saw a cloud of smoke hit the side of

the "sub." near the conning-tower. The German was hit, he stopped shelling and steamed full speed ahead. He couldn't submerge, because his hull was damaged by the "Q" ship's shell. Behind him drove the "Q" ship at about nine knots, belching clouds of black smoke from a roaring furnace, but the "sub.," whose speed was at least eighteen knots, gained on the "Q" ship and rapidly left her astern while he went over the horizon and disappeared. Radio warnings flashed from the "Q" ship to all vessels near, warning them to stand by, and three destroyers rose over the skyline and raced after the "sub." But they didn't get him. He had repaired his rent hull and submerged. Later the same "Q" ship tackled a "sub." which, after a battle, signalled that she wanted to surrender. Whereupon the "Q" ship ceased fire, and the much faster "sub." took advantage and tore off full speed ahead! No doubt the German commander reasoned that it was quite fair when a war was on.

The British Admiralty got news that a South American state was harbouring a German "sub." which had been seen in a Gulf of Mexico port right on the track of the Allies' oil supplies. So another dirty collier, *alias* a "Q" ship, was sent to the Gulf to cut out the "sub." All round the Gulf went the "Q" ship hunting that "sub.," but could not raise the bird anywhere. The "Q" ship felt beaten and she went into Jamaica to coal and wait for more news of the "sub." One day the captain was speaking to a naval intelligence officer when he had the mystery unexpectedly cleared up. He heard that an American film director had bought an old German "sub." from a South American state with the intention of using the "sub." to stage a film show. One day the old "sub.," filled with actors, and with a famous American woman movie star aboard, was attacking a dummy merchant ship, when a passing steamer took it for real war and raced into port to tell the authorities a German "sub." had appeared off the coast.

The tale of the *Farnboro* mystery "Q" ship—formerly the *Lodger*, a tramp of 2500 tons—is a thrilling one. The *Farnboro* cruised six weary months, steering by day towards a British port, by night outward bound, and pitched and rolled in a heavy winter sea. All that time never a "sub." did she sight. One bright morning in early spring, her captain stepped down to the saloon to drink some coffee, and when he came back to the wheelhouse a few minutes later the officer of



the watch exclaimed: "Look, here's a torpedo coming, sir!"

On the surface of the water a row of bubbles and a white line of foam marked the track of the deadly weapon. Buzzers called the gun crew to stations, the officers of quarters snapped out an order to "be quiet!" since the men thought the alarm a false one, and above on deck the panic party seemed to be asleep.

Up rose the conning-tower of a German "sub." which fired across the "Q" ship's deck. The *Farnboro* stopped blowing off steam from the exhaust, on came the "sub." at high speed, and at 500 yards range let fly a shot which dropped in the sea. The panic party on deck got ready to abandon ship. The "sub." came nearer, and at the right moment the "Q" ship dropped the flaps and fired a 12-pounder shell which badly holed the oncoming "sub." He tried to submerge, but he was too late. A veritable rain of shot and shell from the "Q" ship tore up his hull and raked the gaps. He sank by the stern, and the "Q" ship dropped a depth charge over the spot. A column of water shot into the air, and the bow of the "sub." came to the surface of the sea and hung vertically right by the "Q" ship. The gun crew opened fire and hit the riddled hull with six shells. The "sub." again sank, and the "Q" ship steamed over the spot, dropping deadly depth charges.

This "Q" ship met an exciting end. She was steaming some way off the S.W. of Ireland, on 17th February 1917, watching the track of a torpedo aimed at her. The alarm bells were ringing when the torpedo hit her hull with a terrific explosion, tearing a huge hole in her side. The engineer spoke through the tube to the captain and told him the engine-room was filling with water.

"Right!" said the captain. "Remain at your post and secure the boilers as the water rises!"

Down in the engine-room badly wounded men were lying, but they had to stop in the sinking ship so that the "sub." might be killed. At last the stokers came up and lay hidden on the engine-room gratings. Now the periscope was seen, and the German "sub." rose to the surface and motored all round the *Farnboro*, which was awash. He wanted to make sure that there was nothing suspicious about her. Peeping inside the wheelhouse, the "Q" ship captain could see the German "sub." passing below under water. It was unsafe to fire before she rose to the surface as the "sub." would let

loose a torpedo if he saw anything suspicious. The panic party made for the boats, up came the "sub.," hull and conning-tower well above the water. The German commander was just stepping out of his conning-tower to have a word with the panic party in the "Q" ship's boats, when flaps fell away from the hidden guns, and the "Q" ship rained shell after shell on the amazed German "sub." which was now at point-blank range. The "sub." sank, holed and riddled with shots, while the panic boat standing by picked up one officer and one man of the "sub.'s" crew. But the *Farnboro* "Q" ship was sinking fast. She radioed her S O S, and a destroyer arrived on the scene and took off all her men. Two sloops towed the sinking ship to port, where she sank waterlogged and was beached.

The yarn of the adventures of *Dunraven*, another "Q" ship, is also thrilling. She was a collier, and one summer day was seen zigzagging across the Bay of Biscay, 140 miles west of Ushant light, armed aft with a small gun, and clearly anxious to get safely out of the zone of the German "subs." into the comparatively safer waters of the Mediterranean. Suddenly, her look-out sighted a German "sub." on the skyline, lying in wait for such heavily-laden cargo steamers as the *Dunraven* seemed to be. The day was fair, and the captain was sitting in a deck-chair on top of the wheelhouse, enjoying the peaceful weather. He saw the "sub." submerge," and nothing more happened.

About three-quarters of an hour later, at noon, the German "sub." poked his periscope above the surface some 6000 yards away. Then his hull rose, and he opened fire on the collier. The collier answered with a shot from a gun which made a lot of smoke, then she reduced her speed to eight knots and zigzagged to avoid the possible torpedo of the "sub." The "Q" ship was now steaming head on to the sea, with the enemy's shells splashing into the sea on the other side of her decks. Half an hour passed, and the "sub." ceased fire, and came on at top speed, when at nearer range she again opened fire. The "Q" ship slowly reduced speed so as not to excite any suspicions of the "sub." Then she pretended to get "rattled," and sent out frantic radios, not in code, and bleating for help: "Help, help, help! submarine attacking me. Come quickly, am abandoning ship! Hurry!"

The "sub." now turned broadside on to the "Q" ship, whose captain ordered the engineer to blow off steam from

the fake pipe, to make the "sub." think he had hit her. The "Q" ship stopped, her panic party quitted in the usual frantic hurry, and the "sub." went on shelling. Dense clouds of steam blew off from her engine-room and she was set afire by the "sub.'s" shell which hit a hidden depth charge exploding in her stern. The explosion lifted a lieutenant clean out of his hidden control station, but he managed to crawl back again wounded.

On came the "sub." under a cloud of dense smoke, and still shelling the "Q" ship, whose decks became red-hot with the fire blazing below. The crew had to lift boxes of cordite from the red-hot deck to prevent more explosions. Then a terrific explosion shook the ship. Her aft magazine blew up, shooting gun and crew into the air, and setting the alarm bells ringing. The gun flaps dropped, but the astounded German "sub." which had been badly hit by the "Q" ship's guns, was so frightened by the terrific explosion that she dived down at once. The bluff had been called. When the "sub." rose again, he let loose a torpedo on the blazing "Q" ship, which was every minute expecting another magazine to explode.

The "Q" ship actually sent out radio messages warning warships to keep away while she killed the "sub." Twenty minutes after the explosion a torpedo hit the "Q" ship abaft her engine-room. Now, for an hour, the "sub.'s" periscope could be seen swimming round the burning ship whose red-hot decks were like a monster firework show exploding with cordite shells. Then the "sub." came up, fired his Maxim gun on the panic party in the boats, and shelled the "Q" ship from a position on which guns could not be brought to bear.

The "Q" ship fired a torpedo and missed, fired another and missed, then flashed out an S O S. Almost immediately the United States warship *Norma* rose over the sky-line, steamed at full speed across the "sub.'s" track, and fired at his periscope. *Norma* sent out doctors to attend the "Q" ship's wounded, and the "sub." vanished. The "Q" ship sank two days later, as she was being towed to port, and was blown up with a depth charge to prevent her becoming a dangerous derelict.

Campbell and his chief officer, armed only with a candle, were down in the waterlogged, dark bunkers looking for the ship's cat.

It was the same black cat which earlier in the fight was

blown overboard, swam to the stern then under water, and thus regained the ship.

Rear-Admiral Gordon Campbell, V.C., who was captain of the *Dunraven*, stated, in 1931, that a fire was raging round the magazine and the crew had to wait a boat coming to take them off. The sea was very rough, and not more than four men could be taken at a time. Yet, knowing they might be blown up at any moment, the men stood silently waiting to be taken off. . . . At the last moment a destroyer tossing by the side of the *Dunraven* came alongside, so that the men could jump one by one to her deck. They were all saved, but owing to their serious wounds, did not live long after the War. At a parliamentary general election in 1930, when Campbell "stood" for the constituency of Burnley, two of the survivors came to the Lancashire town to see that "he came to no harm in the elections."

Sea war showed that it was practicable to carry a 4-inch gun on tramp ships of only 350 tons, but as the U-boats grew wary of tramp steamers, the British Admiralty decided to fit out sailing ships as decoys. Such a ship was the *Prize* which was cruising off the west coast of Ireland one evening, 30th April 1917, when, two miles away on the port beam, the look-out saw a big grey hull of an enemy "sub."—U 93, then the latest type of submarine, on a maiden trip from Emden. U 93 had sunk eleven merchant steamers and was on the way back to Germany.

The "sub." mistook the *Prize* for a trader, came nearer, and began firing. The panic party left the *Prize*, whose head was put up into the wind. When the German "sub." was seventy yards away, the "Q" ship ran up the white naval ensign disclosing her identity, and hit the "sub." below the forward gun. The gun was destroyed and the crew killed. Another shell blew away the "sub.'s" conning-tower, and the "Q" ship swept the "sub.'s" deck with a Lewis gun.

The "sub." sank and came up bow swinging on the tide. The "Q" ship could see a red glow as of an internal fire or explosion visible through the rents in the "sub.'s" hull. All this occurred in a few minutes. The panic party picked up Von Spiegel, the "sub.'s" commander, and two other survivors, who set to and helped the British to save the "Q" ship, which was almost foundering, with the water pouring in through the holes in her sides. The Germans and the British together managed to start an auxiliary engine and made for the Irish coast 120 miles away, all sails set. Near the Old

Head of Kinsale, the *Prize* was picked up and she was towed to Queenstown, reaching port the same day as that on which the first U.S. destroyers arrived in Europe.

*Now occurred a very strange thing!* Von Spiegel's "sub.," the U 93, had not been sunk at all, although both he and the British "Q" ship were certain the "sub." had been killed. True the "sub." had been badly hit, but though she could not dive, she escaped in the darkness, deprived of her radio, and navigated by a German sub-lieutenant and a small crew, managed to get back safely to the port of Emden, Germany, where Kaiser William decorated the lieutenant. This "sub" was sent to the bottom after a collision with a steamer the next year!

Meantime, the German "subs." had orders to keep a sharp look-out for the British "Q" ship *Prize*, and destroy her at any costs. Some months later this "Q" ship mysteriously disappeared. She was working as a decoy in company with a British submarine—this was another device of the British Admiralty's war on the German U-boats. At noon, one day in the Atlantic, off the N.W. of Ireland, the "Q" ship saw a U-boat and manœuvred so as to be able to fire on the "sub." and sink her. She opened fire, but the German "sub." at once dived. It is likely that the German "sub." was simply identifying the "Q" ship.

All the next night the British submarine and "Q" ship kept together, then, in the morning, just before dawn, the British submarine was startled to hear a terrible explosion. When daylight came the submarine looked round but saw no sign of the "Q" ship or her survivors. It was surmised that the German "sub." had been dogging the "Q" ship all day, and had torpedoed her at night, sinking all hands. The British submarine hung round all day, and when the U-boat rose to the surface to see if there were any survivors, the British submarine fired a torpedo and missed. The U-boat made off and was seen no more.

Trawlers, destroyers, and patrol boats, anxious to save life, on occasions mussed up some finely staged "Q" boat and "sub." scenes. One "Q" ship was looking after a German "sub." when up dashed a torpedo-boat destroyer and hoisted a signal for the "Q" ship to stop at once. The "Q" ship—a very profane crew watching—stopped and the destroyer came closer. An officer bawled through a megaphone: "There are enemy submarines in the Channel. Go into port at once!" As it happened, the officer was an old

shipmate of the captain of the " Q " ship, which would otherwise have had to go into port to get clearance papers. He let the " Q " ship go on her way.

She steamed four miles, when a little trawler made for her at top speed and ordered the " Q " ship to make for port. The " Q " ship did not change her course, and the trawler brought her gun to bear under the impression that she had met a German raider. She was about to fire, when the torpedo boat, seeing what had happened, rushed up and cleared the trawler away. On another occasion the captain of a " Q " ship was tackling a German " sub." when a converted yacht barged in, under the impression she was helping a poor merchantman. The " sub." dived and made off.

The war-time " Q " ship, *Mary M. Mitchell*, which sank two German U-boats in the Bay of Biscay, is still sailing the sea off Ireland (March 1934), while the former commander of the " Q " ship collier transport, *Prince Charles*, which sank U 36 off the Orkneys, in July 1915, was on the " dole " in 1934, when he was made the victim of the means test.

H.M.S. *Heather*, which attacked many U-boats off the west coast of Ireland, towed into the Welsh harbour of Fishguard a torpedoed steamer, the *Redbridge*, which was expected every minute to go to the bottom of the St. George's Channel, with a cargo of cotton, from Alexandria, worth £750,000. The Admiralty signalled this " Q " ship a special message of congratulation for the good job she had done. In 1931 she was heard of on the way to the shipbreaker's yard at Devonport, England.

In the last year of the war, " Q " ships completely failed in their purpose. There were many of them still prowling about the seas, but not one German submarine was sunk by them after August 1917.

One mystery about the Grand Fleet base at Scapa Flow was not revealed until 1931. It was then told how, in 1918, a wonderful recording apparatus was installed at the head of the channel. This device was in the shape of an electrically illuminated moving chart, recalling those used in the London Underground railways and certain of the above ground railroads to keep track of trains on the line. Points of light graphically showed the progress of any vessel entering the waters leading to Scapa. It signalled the first entrance of special German submarines sent in 1918 to attack the naval base. The submarines slowly travelled up the channel, quite unaware that their every movements were being telegraphed to

and recorded on this moving light chart. On they went until, at a given moment, an operator in Grand Fleet base control room touched a switch, and a roaring submarine explosion terminated the careers of the raiders. By that time Germany had lost, by depth charges, destroyers, mines, and mystery ships, 199 submarines out of 320.

## ESCAPE OF LORD NITHSDALE FROM THE TOWER

ANONYMOUS

IT was at the surrender of Preston, in the rebellion of 1715, that William Maxwell, Earl of Nithsdale, was taken prisoner ; and early in the following year he was brought to trial, and found guilty of high treason. Winter had set in with great rigour before the Countess received the melancholy tidings that her husband was in the Tower, and that his life was in imminent danger. She heard, too, that he had manifested the utmost anxiety to have the consolation of seeing her.

Although at Terregles, near Traquair in Peeblesshire, when the news reached her, consulting only her affection, this noble-minded woman determined to set off without delay. In these days, when conveyances were of the most imperfect kind, a hasty journey, at such a dreary season, to the British capital was not a light undertaking. She rode to Newcastle on horseback, whence she proceeded to York by stage. On her arrival at York, the country was covered to such a depth with snow, and the weather was so inclement, that it was impossible for the stage to continue its progress. Even the mail could not be forwarded. But while her husband stood in need of comfort and succour, she was not to be stopped by the formidable obstacles which were opposed to her. She resolutely took horse, and though the snow was generally above the horse's girths, she reached London safe and sound, without any accident.

But though she had happily accomplished her toilsome journey, there were still serious difficulties to be overcome. On applying to the Government to be allowed to see her husband, she met with a repulse ; she was told that her wish could not be granted, unless she would consent to be shut up with him in the Tower. To this, however, she would not submit, and she assigned as her reason, that she was in a



state of health which would not suffer her to undergo confinement. Her real motive for refusing was, that her being thus secluded would prevent her from soliciting on her husband's behalf, and, which was of far more importance, would render abortive a scheme which she had already formed to effect his escape. The negative which she had received from the Government did not prevent her from obtaining frequent interviews with her husband. By bribing the guards she often contrived to see her lord, till the day upon which he was condemned ; after that she was allowed, for the last week, to see and take her leave of him.

As soon as she arrived in London, she began her exertions to ward off the danger which hung over the man she loved. Her first applications were made to persons in office, and those possessing political influence. The result would have disheartened any one less determined than she was to persevere. Not a single individual held out to her the slightest hope ; from every mouth she heard the dreadful assurance that though some of the captives would be pardoned, it was absolutely certain that Lord Nithsdale would not be included in the number. From a direct appeal to the sovereign there was little or no prospect of benefit. George I is said to have expressly prohibited any petition being conveyed into his hands from the Earl, and even to have taken precautions to avoid a personal supplication being made to him. Lord Nithsdale, however, was extremely anxious that the king should receive one—not, it appears, merely for his own sake, but because he flattered himself that it might excite an interest in favour of his wife.

Though the Countess felt convinced that the step would be unavailing, she consented to make the trial for the purpose of satisfying her husband. In the narrative she wrote to her sister of her husband's escape, she gives an account of her interview with the king :

“ So the first day that I heard the king was to go to the drawing-room, I dressed myself in black, as if I had been in mourning, and sent for Mrs. Morgan (the same who accompanied me to the Tower) ; because, as I did not know his majesty personally, I might have mistaken some other person for him. She stayed by me, and told me when he was coming. I had another lady with me (Lady Nairn), and we remained in a room between the king's apartments and the drawing-room, so that he was obliged to go through it ; and as there were three windows

in it, we sat in the middle one, that I might have time enough to meet him before he could pass. I threw myself at his feet, and told him in French that I was the unfortunate Countess of Nithsdale, that he might not pretend to be ignorant of my person. But perceiving that he wanted to go off without receiving my petition, I caught hold of the skirt of his coat, that he might stop and hear me. He endeavoured to escape out of my hands, but I kept such strong hold, that he dragged me on my knees from the middle of the room to the very door of the drawing-room. At last one of the blue ribbons who attended his majesty took me round the waist, while another wrested the coat out of my hands. The petition, which I had endeavoured to thrust into his pocket, fell down in the scuffle, and I almost fainted away through grief and disappointment. One of the gentlemen-in-waiting picked up the petition; and as I knew that it ought to have been given to the lord of the bedchamber, who was then in waiting, I wrote to him, and entreated him to do me the favour to read the petition which I had had the honour to present to his majesty. Fortunately for me, it happened to be my Lord Dorset, with whom Mrs. Morgan was very intimate. Accordingly, she went into the drawing-room and delivered him the letter, which he received very graciously. He could not read it then, as he was at cards with the prince; but as soon as ever the game was over, he read it, and behaved (as I afterwards learned) with the warmest zeal for my interest, and was seconded by the Duke of Montrose, who had seen me in the ante-chamber, and wanted to speak to me. But I made him a sign not to come near me, lest his acquaintance might thwart my designs. They read over the petition several times, but without any success; but it became the topic of their conversation the rest of the evening; and the harshness with which I had been treated soon spread abroad, not much to the honour of the king."

This abortive supplication seems to have even accelerated the fate of Lord Nithsdale and his fellow-prisoners. It was made on Monday the 13th of February, and on Thursday or Friday following, it was resolved in council, that the sentence passed on the delinquents should be carried into effect. The needful preliminary warrants and orders to the lieutenant of the Tower, and to the sheriffs of London and Middlesex, were accordingly issued on Saturday. While these matters were in progress, the Countess of Derwentwater, accompanied by the Duchess of Cleveland and Bolton, and several other ladies

of the highest rank, succeeded in obtaining a private audience with the king, and implored his clemency for her husband. She was suffered to speak, but her prayers were in vain.

There was yet one resource left. It was, indeed, a weak one. This was to petition the two Houses of Parliament to intercede for the criminals. On the 21st of February the wives of the doomed lords, with about twenty more women of rank, went to the Parliament House to present petitions, and solicit the members as they entered. Nothing, however, was done by either assembly on that day. On the ensuing morning the mournful bands of wives, with an increased number of female friends, again stationed themselves in the lobbies to win the votes of the members. This measure produced considerable effect; many were moved by the tears and pleadings of the melancholy supplicants. In the Commons the petitions were presented by Sir Richard Steele, Mr. Shippen, and others, all of whom strenuously exerted themselves to turn the scale on the side of mercy. The speech of Sir Richard Steele in particular was copious and forcible; it must have been powerful in its effect, for it drew down on him the virulent abuse and slander of the ministerial journals. The motion to address the king in favour of the delinquents was hotly opposed by the ministers and the staunchest of their adherents. Walpole with violence scarcely stopped short of stigmatising as traitors all who wished the king to exercise in this instance his prerogative of pardoning. Fearing that, if the question of an address were put to the vote, he should be left in a minority, he moved an adjournment for a week. He carried his point, but in so doing closed one avenue to the gates of mercy.

The struggle was still more vigorously made in the Upper House. Many of the Lords had been gained over by female eloquence. An animated debate took place on the question of whether the petitions should be read. The permitting them to be read was vehemently opposed by the ministers and their friends; nevertheless it was carried in the affirmative by a small majority. Foiled in this point, the opponents of the petitions next contended, that the sovereign had no power to pardon or reprove persons who had been sentenced under an impeachment. But here again they failed, it being decided that the disputed power was possessed by the king. Having thus far succeeded, the advocates of the condemned peers moved that an address should be presented to his majesty, entreating him to grant a respite to the convicted

lords. The opposite party, however, moved as an amendment' that his majesty should be requested to reprieve such of the guilty peers as should deserve his mercy. The amendment was carried, as was also another—that the time of the respite should be left to his majesty's discretion. The address was presented on the same evening; and the king replied, that, on this and other occasions, he would do as he thought most consistent with the dignity of his crown and the safety of his people.

The meaning of the king's words did not long remain ambiguous. On the evening of the next day, the 23rd of February, a council was held to decide upon, or rather to announce, the fate of the prisoners. A respite was granted to the Earl of Carnwath and the Lords Widdington and Nairn, but orders were given to execute the Earls of Derwentwater, Nithsdale, and Viscount Kenmure, on the following morning.

From the very first, the Countess of Nithsdale had placed but little reliance upon the royal clemency, and had busied herself in devising the means for the Earl's escape. But as soon as she heard the turn which the debate had taken in the House of Peers, she saw clearly that her husband must expect no favour from the Government. There remained, therefore, no other resource than to carry into effect, without delay, the scheme which she had formed to save him. She had less than twenty-four hours in which to accomplish her purpose. If within that short time she could not rescue her husband, his death was inevitable. With what admirable skill and presence of mind she achieved her arduous task, must be told in her own words:

"As the motion had passed generally, I thought I could draw some advantage in favour of my design. Accordingly, I immediately left the House of Lords, and hastened to the Tower, where, after affecting an air of joy and satisfaction, I told all the guards I passed that I came to bring joyful tidings to the prisoner. I desired them to lay aside their fears, for the petition had passed the House in their favour. I then gave them some money to drink to the lords and his majesty, though it was but trifling; for I thought that if I were too liberal on the occasion, they might suspect my designs, and that giving them something would gain their good humour and service for the next day, which was the eve of the execution. The next morning I could not go to the Tower, having so many

things on my hands to put in readiness ; but in the evening, when all was ready, I sent for Mrs. Mills, with whom I lodged, and acquainted her with my design of attempting my lord's escape, as there was no prospect of his being pardoned, and this was the last night before the execution. I told her that I had everything in readiness, and that I trusted she would not refuse to accompany me—that my lord might pass for her. I pressed her to come immediately, as we had no time to lose. At the same time, I sent for Mrs. Morgan, then usually known by the name of *Hilton*, to whose acquaintance my dear Evans (her maid) had introduced me, which I looked upon as a very singular happiness. I immediately communicated my resolution to her. She was of a very tall and slender make, so I begged her to put under her own riding hood one that I had prepared for Mrs. Mills—as she was to lend hers to my lord—that in coming out he might be taken for her. Mrs. Mills was then with child, so that she was not only of the same height, but nearly the same size, as my lord. When we were in the coach I never ceased talking, that they might have no leisure to reflect. Their surprise and astonishment when I first opened my design to them, had made them consent without ever thinking of the consequences.

“On our arrival at the Tower, the first I introduced was Mrs. Morgan ; for I was only allowed to take in one at a time. She brought in the clothes that were to serve Mrs. Mills, when she left her own behind her. When Mrs. Morgan had taken off what she had brought for my purpose, I conducted her back to the staircase ; and in going I begged her to send me in my maid to dress me—that I was afraid of being too late to present my petition that night if she did not come immediately. I despatched her safe, and went partly down stairs to meet Mrs. Mills, who had the precaution to hold her handkerchief to her face, as was very natural for a woman to do when she was going to bid her last farewell to a friend on the eve of his execution. I had, indeed, desired her to do it, that my lord might go out in the same manner. Her eyebrows were rather inclined to be sandy, and my lord's were dark and very thick ; however, I had prepared some paint, of the colour of hers, to disguise his with. I also bought an artificial head-dress of the same coloured hair as hers ; and I painted his face with white, and his cheeks with rouge, to hide his long beard, which he had not had time to shave. All this provision I had before left in the Tower. The poor guards, whom my slight

liberality the day before had endeared me to, let me go quietly with my company, and were not so strictly on the watch as they usually had been; and the more so, as they were persuaded, from what I had told them the day before, that the prisoners would obtain their pardon. I made Mrs. Mills take off her own hood, and put on that which I had brought for her. I then took her by the hand, and led her out of my lord's chamber, and in passing through the next room, in which there were several people, with all the concern imaginable I said: 'My dear Mrs. Catherine, go in all haste and send me my waiting-maid; she certainly cannot reflect how late it is; she forgets that I am to present a petition to-night, and if I let slip this opportunity I am undone, for to-morrow will be too late. Hasten her as much as possible, for I shall be on thorns till she comes.' Everybody in the room, who were chiefly guards' wives and daughters, seemed to compassionate me exceedingly, and the sentinel officiously opened the door. When I had seen her out, I returned back to my lord and finished dressing him. I had taken care that Mrs. Mills did not go out crying, as she came in, that my lord might the better pass for the lady who came in crying and afflicted; and the more so, because he had the same dress she wore.

"When I had almost finished dressing my lord in all my petticoats, excepting one, I perceived that it was growing dusk, and was afraid that the light of the candles might betray us; so I resolved to set off. I went out leading him by the hand, and he held his handkerchief to his eyes. I spoke to him in the most piteous and afflicted tone of voice, bemoaning bitterly the negligence of Evans, who had ruined me by her delay. Then said I: 'My dear Mrs. Betty, for the love of God run quickly and bring her with you. You know my lodging, and if ever you made despatch in your life, do it at present. I am almost distracted with this disappointment.' The guards opened the doors, and I went downstairs with him, still conjuring to make all possible despatch. As soon as he had cleared the door, I made him walk before me, for fear the sentinel should take notice of his walk; but I still continued to press him to make all the despatch he possibly could. At the bottom of the stairs I met my dear Evans, into whose hands I confided him.

"I had before engaged Mr. Mills to be in readiness before the Tower to conduct him to some place of safety, in case he succeeded. He looked upon the affair as so

very improbable to succeed, that his astonishment when he saw us threw him into such consternation, that he was almost out of himself ; which Evans perceiving, with the greatest presence of mind, without telling him (Lord Nithsdale) anything, lest he should mistrust them, conducted him to some of her own friends, on whom she could rely, and so secured him—without which we should have been undone. When she had conducted him and left him with them, she returned to find Mr. Mills, who by this time had recovered himself from his astonishment. They went home together ; and having found a place of security, they conducted him to it.

“ In the meanwhile, as I had pretended to have sent the young lady on a message, I was obliged to return upstairs and go back to my lord’s room, in the same feigned anxiety of being too late ; so that everybody seemed sincerely to sympathise with my distress. When I was in the room, I talked to him as if he had been really present, and answered my own questions in my lord’s voice, as nearly as I could imitate it. I walked up and down, as if we were conversing together, till I thought they had time enough thoroughly to clear themselves of the guards. I then thought proper to make off also. I opened the door, and stood half in it, that those in the outward chamber might hear what I said ; but held it so close that they could not look in. I bid my lord a formal farewell for that night, and added, that something more than usual must have happened to make Evans negligent on this important occasion, who had always been so punctual in the smallest trifles ; that I saw no other remedy but to go in person ; that if the Tower were still open when I finished my business, I would return that night ; but that he might be assured that I would be with him as early in the morning as I could gain admittance to the Tower ; and I flattered myself I should bring favourable news. Then, before I shut the door, I pulled through the string of the latch, so that it could only be opened on the inside. I then shut it with some degree of force, that I might be sure of its being well shut. I said to the servant as I passed by, who was ignorant of the whole transaction, that he need not carry candles in to his master till my lord sent for him, as he desired to finish some prayers first. I went downstairs and called a coach, as there were several on the stand. I drove home to my lodgings, where poor Mr. Mackenzie had been waiting to carry the petition, in case my attempt failed. I told him there was no need of any petition, as my lord

was safe out of the Tower, and out of the hands of his enemies ; but that I did not know where he was.

" I discharged the coach, and sent for a sedan-chair, and went to the Duchess of Buccleuch, who expected me about that time, as I had begged of her to present the petition for me, having taken my precautions against all events. I asked if she were at home, and they answered that she expected me, and had another duchess with her. I refused to go upstairs, as she had company with her, and I was not in a condition to see any other company. I begged to be shown into a chamber below stairs, and that they would have the goodness to send her grace's maid to me, having something to say to her. I had discharged the chair, lest I might be pursued and watched. When the maid came in, I desired her to present my most humble respects to her grace, who they told me had company with her, and to acquaint her that this was my only reason for not coming upstairs. I also charged her with my sincerest thanks for her kind offer to accompany me when I went to present my petition. I added that she might spare herself any further trouble, as it was now judged more advisable to present one general petition in the name of all ; however, that I should never be unmindful of my particular obligations to her grace, which I would return very soon to acknowledge in person.

" I then desired one of the servants to call a chair, and I went to the Duchess of Montrose, who had always borne a part in my distresses. When I arrived, she left her company to deny herself, not being able to see me under the affliction which she judged me to be in. By mistake, however, I was admitted ; so there was no remedy. She came to me ; and as my heart was in an ecstasy of joy, I expressed it in my countenance as she entered the room. I ran up to her in the transport of my joy. She appeared to be exceedingly shocked and frightened, and has since confessed to me that she apprehended my trouble had thrown me out of myself, till I communicated my happiness to her. She then advised me to retire to some place of security, for that the king was highly displeased, and even enraged, at the petition I had presented to him, and had complained of it severely. I sent for another chair ; for I always discharged them immediately, lest I might be pursued. Her grace said she would go to court and see how the news of my lord's escape was received. When the news was brought to the king, he flew into an excess of passion, and said he was betrayed, for it could not have been done without some confederacy.



He instantly despatched two persons to the Tower, to see that the other prisoners were secure, lest they should follow the example. Some threw the blame upon one, some upon another. The duchess was the only one at court who knew it.

"When I left the duchess, I went to a house which Evans had found out for me, and where she promised to acquaint me where my lord was. She got thither some few minutes after me, and told me that, when she had seen him secure, she went in search of Mr. Mills, who by this time had recovered himself from his astonishment; that he returned to her house, where she had found him, and that he had removed my lord from the first place, where she had desired him to wait, to the house of a poor woman directly opposite to the guard-house. She had but one small room, up one pair of stairs, and a very small bed in it. We threw ourselves upon the bed, that we might not be heard walking up and down. She left us a bottle of wine and some bread, and Mrs. Mills brought us some more in her pocket the next day. We subsisted on this provision from Thursday till Saturday night, when Mrs. Mills came and conducted my lord to the Venetian ambassador's. We did not communicate the affair to his excellency, but one of his servants concealed him in his own room till Wednesday, on which day the ambassador's coach-and-six was to go down to Dover to meet his brother. My lord put on a livery, and went down in the retinue, without the least suspicion, to Dover, where Mr. Mitchell, the ambassador's servant, hired a small vessel, and immediately set sail for Calais. The passage was so remarkably short, that the captain threw out this reflection, that the wind could not have served better if his passengers had been flying for their lives, little thinking it to be really the case.

"For my own part, I absconded to the house of a very honest man in Drury Lane, where I remained until I was assured of my lord's safe arrival on the Continent. I then wrote to the Duchess of Buccleuch—everybody thought till then that I was gone off with my lord—to tell her that I understood I was suspected of having contrived my lord's escape, as was very natural to suppose; that if I could have been happy enough to have done so, I should be flattered to have the merit of it attributed to me; but that a bare suspicion, without proof, could never be a sufficient ground for my being punished for a supposed offence, though it might be motive enough to me to provide a place of security; so I entreated her

to procure leave for me to go with safety about my business. So far from granting my request, they were resolved to secure me if possible. After several debates, Mr. Solicitor-General (Mr. Fortescue Aland), who was an utter stranger to me, had the humanity to say, that since I showed so much respect to Government as not to appear in public, it would be cruel to make any search after me; upon which it was decided, that if I remained concealed no further search should be made, but that if I appeared either in England or Scotland I should be secured."

This scanty portion of kindness was of no benefit whatever to the countess. "It was not," says she, "sufficient for me, unless I would submit to expose my son to beggary." With her wonted spirit, she determined that, having already risked her life for the safety of the father, she would once more hazard it for the fortune of the child. On first hearing of her husband's apprehension, she had thought it prudent to conceal many important family papers and other valuables; and having no person at hand with whom they could be safely entrusted, had hid them underground, in a place known only to the gardener, in whom she could entirely confide. It had proved a happy precaution; for after her departure the house had been searched, and as she expressed it, "God only knows what might have transpired from those papers." In addition to the danger of their being discovered, there was the imminent risk of their being destroyed by damp, so that no time must be lost in regaining them before too late. She therefore determined on another journey to the north, and, for greater secrecy, on horseback, though this mode of travelling, which was new to her, was extremely fatiguing. She, however, with her maid Mrs. Evans, and a servant that could be depended on, set out from London, and reached Traquair in safety, and without any one being aware of her intentions. Here she ventured to rest two days, in the society of her sister-in-law and Lord Traquair, feeling security in the conviction, that as the lord-lieutenant of the county was an old friend of her husband's, he would not allow any search to be made after her without first giving her warning to abscond. From thence she proceeded to Terregles, whither it was supposed she came with the permission of Government; and to keep up that opinion, she invited her neighbours to visit her. That same night she dug up the papers from their hiding-place, where happily they had sustained no

injury, and sent them at once by safe hands to Traquair. This was accomplished just in time, for the magistrates of Dumfries began to entertain suspicions of her right to be there, and desired to see her leave from Government. On hearing this, "I expressed," she says, "my surprise that they had been so backward in paying their respects; 'but,' said I, 'better late than never: be sure to tell them that they shall be welcome whenever they choose to come.' This was after dinner; but I lost no time to put everything in readiness, yet with all possible secrecy; and the next morning, before daybreak, I set off again for London, with the same attendants, and, as before, I put up at the smallest inns, and arrived safe once more."

George I could not forgive Lady Nithsdale for the heroic part she had acted. This was manifested in various ways. When he was petitioned for dower by the widows of the peers who had been found guilty of treason, he granted the request, with only one exception; that exception was the Countess of Nithsdale, whom he declared not to be entitled to the same privilege. He is even said to have forbidden her name to be uttered in his presence. *Her visit to Scotland only served to increase his wrath.* "A lady informed me," says Lady Nithsdale, "that the king was extremely incensed at the news; that he had issued orders to have me arrested; adding, that I did whatever I pleased in despite of all his designs, and that I had given him more trouble than any woman in Europe. For which reasons I kept myself as closely concealed as possible, till the heat of these rumours had abated. In the meanwhile, I took the opinion of a very famous lawyer, who was a man of the strictest probity; he advised me to go off as soon as they had ceased searching for me. I followed his advice, and about a fortnight after I escaped, without any accident whatever."

She met her husband and children at Paris, whither they had come from Bruges to meet her. They soon afterwards joined the Pretender's Court at Avignon; but, finding the mode of life there little to their taste, shortly after returned to Italy, where they lived in great privacy. Lord Nithsdale died at Rome in 1744; his wife survived him five years.

# THE MADMAN IN THE DESERT

By

EX-LÉGIIONNAIRE 1384

*Ex-Légionnaire 1384, then calling himself John Barrington, and his friend McCann were sent as secret service agents of the French Government in North Africa to track down a certain Arab suspected of white slave traffic, smuggling, and other crimes. Following their suspect into the desert, they are captured by Towegs, a wandering tribe of Arabs. McCann finds favour in the eyes of the chief's daughter and is actually persuaded to go through a form of marriage with her, but the author is stripped, strapped on to a horse, and made to do "The Ride of Death," that is, ride between ranks of the Arabs, each of whom is armed with a long thonged whip. Thinking him dead they allow the horse, mad with fright, to escape into the desert. The author is rescued from his terrible plight by an old Arab woman, who gives him Arab robes, and tells him how he may reach Fort Boura, a desert fort of the French Foreign Legion. The author starts his story at this point.*

THE journey to Fort Boura took me nearly fourteen hours. Without boots it was impossible to travel fast, and I discovered that I was still pretty weak after what I had been through, and was compelled to take frequent rests to gather strength before pushing on again. The night was bitterly cold, and there was not much warmth in the tattered cloak which Telegi had given me. When the sun rose, the conditions became even worse, as the cloak was a poor protection against the blistering heat, and my back pained me abominably. I was just beginning to think that I should never succeed in reaching the fort and should have been wiser to stay on the oasis, when I saw on the horizon what I took to be a wireless mast. I plodded on towards it and before long was able to make out the buildings of the fort and the

tricolour floating above them. Never before had I been so thankful to see the flag of France.

As I drew nearer to the fort, I noticed that the flag was in a sorry state. It hung in tatters, and I knew that the most likely explanation was that it had been ripped to pieces by bullets. That, however, did not disturb me, as the garrisons of these isolated military posts were often engaged in minor scraps with the Arabs. What did cause me to pause a little way from the fort and stare at it in puzzled surprise was the fact that I could detect no signs of life in the place at all—no sentries, no men moving about on the walls, no words of command, no sound of any kind. I saw, too, that the gates were wide open, and got the impression that the post was absolutely deserted. Above it vultures were hovering. To say that I was puzzled is to put it mildly. I knew something of Fort Boura—that it was somewhere between Ghardaia and Touggourt, was garrisoned by the third squadron of the Legion Cavalry, and was one of the posts which were relieved every three months, and it was utterly inconceivable that it should be left unguarded unless something had gone very seriously amiss.

For some time I stood staring at the place, racking my brains for a possible explanation; then, telling myself that in any case the only possible course was to enter the fort, I went forward again. I had not taken more than half a dozen steps in the direction of the walls when I heard the crack of a rifle, and a bullet went whistling past me.

I instantly flung myself flat on the ground and began hastily scooping up the sand to form a little mound in front of me, high enough to serve as a protection for my head. Every soldier of the Legion is taught to do that in the case of a sudden attack, and after a little service in the desert a man becomes so expert at it that it is only a matter of seconds before he is under cover. When on service in the desert he always carries with him a small sand-bag, and as soon as he has made the mound in front of him, his next duty is to fill his sand-bag and take cover behind that. In this way, pushing his sand-bag in front of him and wriggling along the ground, he can advance, slowly but in comparative safety.

Unfortunately I had no sand-bag; but, taking care to keep under cover of the mound, I made as good a substitute as I could. I tore a piece off my burnous, made a rough bag by knotting the two ends, filled it with sand, and placed it on top of the mound. In the meantime, a couple more shots

had come at me, but both of them were wide, and in any case I was now fairly safe so long as I stayed where I was.

For a time I lay quite still, not daring to show myself. The shooting puzzled me. It was unlikely that the garrison of the post would shoot at an Arab who was obviously unarmed and helpless, but there was no doubt that the shots had been fired at me, and the chances were that, if I tried to get into the fort without first convincing the man with the rifle that I was a friend, I should never reach the place alive. But I had to get there somehow. The heat of the sun was almost unbearable, and I could not possibly remain where I was much longer.

After about ten minutes, as there had been no more firing, I raised myself and took a quick glance over my improvised sand-bag. Instantly came the crack of a rifle again and a bullet kicked up the sand no more than a yard ahead of me. I flattened myself promptly and again lay still. My second inspection of the fort had told me nothing—except that there was some one inside it who did not intend to let me get any closer.

I must have lain there in the broiling heat for fully half an hour, trying to decide what to do, and during that time there was no more firing. But that was small comfort. The man who was sniping at me had it all his own way. If I tried either to advance or retire, he could easily put a bullet into me, and I realised that my only chance was to stay where I was for the time being and postpone my attempt to get into the fort until darkness fell. It struck me, however, that if I could get close enough to the walls for my voice to carry to those inside, I might be able to put matters right, so I began cautiously advancing, pushing the sand-bag forward about a foot at a time and wriggling after it. I had no means of knowing whether my manoeuvre was noticed, but no more shots came, and at last, when I was within about twenty-five yards of the walls, I shouted.

For ten minutes or so I kept on shouting, but I got no answer. Not a sound of any sort came from the fort, and I was just wondering whether to risk showing myself again, when the firing restarted. Shot after shot was fired, but after the first few I came to the conclusion that the marksman could not be firing at me. At a range of about twenty-five yards he could hardly fail to hit my sand-bag, and he had not hit it once. Moreover, no bullet had kicked up the sand anywhere near me.

I took a quick look over the sand-bag, and as no bullet came in my direction—though the firing still went on—I took another and a longer look. Again I attracted no unwelcome attention, and ventured to get to my knees. The only living creatures in sight were the vultures that were hovering over the fort. As I glanced up at them, the rifle was fired again and one of the birds fell like a stone.

I saw my chance. Whoever was using the rifle had evidently turned his attention from me to the vultures, and if I was to get inside the fort at all, now was the moment to make the attempt. I sprang to my feet and ran as fast as I could towards the gate.

When I reached the gates, my first glance inside the fort told me what had happened; the place had been attacked by the Arabs and the garrison wiped out. Since rifles were being fired, there might, perhaps, be a few survivors, or it might be that the Arabs had taken possession and it was they who had fired at me. It was a scene of utter chaos. Everywhere lay huddled bodies, some of them gashed with horrible wounds, and most of them foully mutilated, and here and there was a dead horse. Every window in the buildings was smashed, the walls were scarred by bullets, and the woodwork was splintered; and as far as I could see everything that could be smashed had been smashed. No wonder the vultures were hovering!

I took in the whole scene during the few seconds that I paused at the entrance, and then slipped behind one of the gates. The shooting was still going on, and although I could see no one, some one was not far from me, and I offered a splendid target as I stood at the gateway. Nothing happened, and I came to the conclusion that I had got into the fort without being observed, though I could not shake off the uncomfortable feeling that some one had seen me slip behind the gate and was merely waiting for me to show myself again to have another shot at me. That, however, was a risk that had to be taken. I could not stay where I was indefinitely, and the first thing to be done was to provide myself with some sort of weapon.

I went down on my hands and knees, crawled from behind the gate, and fell flat behind the body of a dead horse. No shot was fired, and after a few moments I wriggled towards one of the dead legionnaires and helped myself to his pistol and several clips of cartridges. I was just about to get to my feet and make a dash for one of the buildings when I heard

the sound of footsteps and promptly flattened myself again and lay still. The footsteps came slowly nearer, and at last round the corner of one of the buildings came the figure of a man. He was a big, broad-shouldered fellow, with a neck like a bull's and a mass of fair hair. He wore the uniform of the Legion, and on his tattered tunic I saw the chevrons of a sergeant. Bound round his head was a dirty blood-stained bandage.

I was so relieved to see a Legion uniform that I almost got to my feet and ran to meet him, but something warned me not to be too impetuous, and I lay still and watched him as he came towards the middle of the courtyard. I could hear that he was talking to himself as he staggered along, and as he had a rifle in his hand, I decided to stay where I was until I knew better what sort of a reception he was likely to give me. If I startled him he might welcome me with a bullet.

He was advancing slowly, dragging something after him with his right hand and grasping his rifle in his left. He changed his direction slightly, and I saw that what he was dragging along the ground was the body of a dead legionnaire. He paused every now and then and addressed a few words to it, and although I could not catch what he said, the man's manner, and the fact that he was carrying on a conversation with a corpse, told me all that I needed to know. He was obviously *cafard*, a victim of the terrible madness which sometimes seizes a man in the desert and from which I had never known a man recover. The symptoms were all too familiar, and I realised that here was the explanation of the shots that had been fired at me as I approached the fort. The sergeant was a raving madman who would shoot at any one he saw. But I had a pistol now, and could deal with him easily enough if the necessity arose. It would have been the simplest thing in the world to drop him as he came staggering across the courtyard, but even a soldier of the Foreign Legion hesitates to shoot a comrade in cold blood, and I decided to hold my fire and await a chance to get close enough to him to prevent him using his rifle when I showed myself.

He came on until he was no more than three yards away from me. There he paused, laid his rifle on the ground, dragged the body into a sitting position and propped it against a dead horse. That done, he picked up his rifle, seated himself beside the corpse and began talking to it again. His back was half-turned towards me, but he was so close that I could hear every word he said. Some of it I could not understand, as



he kept breaking into German, but much of it I remember clearly and could repeat almost word for word.

"Don't worry, my friend," he said, turning towards the corpse and patting its shoulder. "You'll be quite safe here. You can trust me to look after you. Just go to sleep and don't worry. What's that?" He leaned towards the corpse as though listening to his friend's reply, and gave a nod of comprehension. "I know all about the birds, my friend," he said, with a glance at the hovering vultures. "There are seven hundred and sixty-three of them. I know, because I've been keeping count. This morning there were seven hundred and sixty-nine, but I shot five, and one went off home when he saw what was happening to his pals. But he won't get away, my friend. It's no use him trying to desert, because they won't let him desert from the Legion. The French will get him before he reaches the frontier, and then they'll kick his teeth out the same as they did mine. He might just as well have stayed here and been shot like the rest of us. But don't worry about the birds, my friend. They're not going to get you. I'll see they don't. Besides, you always were a skinny devil, and they wouldn't fancy you when there's all these fat fellows lying about."

He raised his rifle, pointed it at the hovering vultures and fired.

"Seven hundred and sixty-two," he announced. "Go to sleep, my friend, and forget the birds. I've worked it out. In two months' time we shall be relieved—say sixty days. I shall shoot thirteen vultures every day and by the time the relief comes there will be none left. Thirteen is a lucky number."

He rambled on for a long time about the vultures, firing an occasional shot at them, and all the time assuring his friend that he had no cause to fear them. The two men had evidently been bosom friends, and the sergeant was tremendously solicitous for the dead man's comfort. He kept on arranging him in a more comfortable position, offering him a cigarette, and his crazy mind utterly failed to grasp the fact that his companion was dead. I made no attempt to interfere. The sergeant was still holding his rifle, and as long as he was armed I must either stay where I was or shoot him. So I stayed where I was, listening to all he said, in the hope that I might get some hint as to what had been happening at Fort Boura.

After a time he forgot the vultures and plunged into

reminiscences—the fights they had been in together, the cafés they had visited, the women they had met. It was a nerve-racking experience to lie there amongst the dead legionnaires and listen to the crazy sergeant recalling their escapades, chuckling over the details of some sordid love-affair, or reminding his friend of some vile orgy in which they had indulged, and to see him every now and then turn towards the corpse and give it a sly dig in the ribs. I thought I had savoured most of the degrading amusements which North Africa had to offer the legionnaire, but if one half of what the sergeant said was true, these two men had left me standing.

At last he got tired of his reminiscences, and there followed a long rambling rigmarole in which wine and women and Arabs and an attack on the fort were hopelessly jumbled together. The poor wretch seemed to be under the impression that the fort had been attacked by an army of women, and that in future it would be his duty to shoot every woman on sight.

"All these men, my friend," he said, with a sweeping gesture round the courtyard, "all these soldiers dead, and every single one of them killed by a woman. All except you and me. But we're different. We understand women, and that's why they couldn't kill us." He chuckled. "That's what you have to do when you become a soldier of France: you have to kill women. It's a nasty business. I've never killed so many women before, but it couldn't be helped. If I hadn't killed them, they'd have killed you and me, my friend. You don't blame me for killing them, do you? You can't blame a man for not wanting to be killed by a woman—especially by an Arab woman. You know what they do to you when they've killed you, don't you? Well, take a look round this place and you'll see. It's a pretty sight, isn't it? The Captain, too. They got him. He always was one to be fond of the women, but I fancy he won't be interested in them any more. But don't worry about the women, my friend. They shan't get you. You go to sleep." He yawned. "We'll both go to sleep. Everybody else is asleep, so why shouldn't we be? If the Captain doesn't like it, he can go to hell. It's tiring work fighting with women."

He rambled on for some time, but I could make neither head nor tail of what he was saying; and at last he laid down his rifle and with a loud yawn leaned back against the dead horse as though intending to sleep. This was the chance for which I had been waiting. I gave him a few minutes to fall asleep and then got cautiously to my feet. The sergeant

made no movement, and in a few quick strides I stepped in front of him, picked up his rifle and placed it beyond his reach. As I turned towards him again, I saw that his eyes were open, staring at me vacantly. I needed no more than the look in his eyes to assure me that he had gone *cafard*.

"It's all right, sergeant," I began soothingly. "I'm a friend—a soldier of the Legion——"

Suddenly he sprang to his feet and stood, half crouching, in front of me, his hands clenching and unclenching, his lips drawn back, his eyes blazing with fury. He took a step towards me, passed his tongue across his lips and crouched a little lower, as though about to spring. He was a massive fellow, and I realised that on no account must I let him spring and get those huge arms round me or those twitching fingers on my throat. At the best of times I should not have had much of a chance against him, and in the present circumstances, when I was weakened by all I had been through and he was possessed of the abnormal strength of a madman, I should not have a dog's chance. I took a quick step forward and drove my fist against his jaw with every ounce of strength I could muster. He grunted, toppled over, and lay still. I dragged him into the shade of one of the buildings, decided that he was well and truly out and could be trusted not to give me any trouble for some considerable time, and set off to make an inspection of the fort.

I made straight for the stables. Since it was clear that the whole garrison, with the exception of the sergeant, had been wiped out, my first thought was of a horse. Given a good mount, I should have little more to worry about. There was water at the fort, and with clothes, a weapon, and a horse, I could make for Ghardara more or less at my leisure. But the plan which I formed so quickly was just as quickly shattered. There was not a single horse in the stables. The Arabs who had attacked the fort had no doubt taken all the animals with them—as, in fact, they had taken everything else that could possibly be moved.

I made a thorough inspection of the fort and found that the place had been most efficiently looted. Ammunition, fodder, horses, stores of every kind had been taken. Even the furniture in the Captain's quarters had disappeared, and everything that was not portable had been smashed to pieces.

It was the same everywhere, with the exception of the wireless room, which the Arabs had evidently overlooked. The instruments, as far as I could see, had not been tampered



*I drove my fist against his jaw with every ounce of strength I could muster.*



with, and it instantly struck me that here was at least a chance of getting out of my predicament. I knew something of wireless. My knowledge was strictly limited, but I thought I might manage to send out a message, provided the apparatus was in order, and if my message were clear enough to be understood, it would not be long before help arrived.

Before attempting the wireless message, I decided to complete my inspection of the fort. It seemed pretty certain that the sergeant was the only survivor of the garrison, but it would be as well to make sure, so I made a thorough search of the various buildings. I found that there was no other living creature in the place.

Having satisfied myself on that point, I returned to the courtyard, provided myself with boots and clothes from one of the dead men, and then went and took a look at the sergeant. He was still unconscious, and I made no effort to revive him. I was anxious to try my luck with the wireless message and did not want to trouble with him. As a precaution against his coming to and taking me unawares, I tied his wrists together and then, having relieved him of some of his cigarettes and a box of matches, I returned to the wireless room and settled down to test my skill as a wireless operator.

I had not sufficient confidence in my skill to attempt anything but the simplest message, and contented myself with "S O S BOURA." I have no idea how many times I sent the message. I kept at it for several hours, sending out the words every few minutes; and I was still at it when darkness came on. I left the wireless room and went to the spot where I had left the sergeant, intending to do what I could to make him comfortable for the night. The sergeant had disappeared.

I turned away and was just setting off to look for him when there came the crack of a pistol and a bullet struck the wall a few feet away from me. I flung myself on the ground and drew my pistol. Somehow the sergeant had managed to get his hands free, and it was now my life against his. I had no idea where he was, as it was pitch dark and I could not even see the buildings on the other side of the courtyard; but he was somewhere not far away, and my only course was to be absolutely still and watch for the flash of his pistol if he should fire again. The trouble was that he had me at a bad disadvantage, since he knew roughly where I was, and if he took it into his head to fire a few shots in the same direction as his last shot, one of them might easily find its mark.

I lay quite still, straining my ears to catch any sound that

might give me a clue to his whereabouts, but no sound came. I thought of shouting to him and assuring him that I was a friend, but promptly dismissed the idea. The man was out of his senses and just as likely to shoot a friend as an enemy, and to call to him would be to reveal my position and invite another shot. I cursed myself for not having put him out of action when I had had the chance to do so earlier in the day.

After what seemed an age, though actually it can hardly have been more than five minutes, I thought I heard a slight sound away on my left, and promptly fired three shots in rapid succession in the direction from which the sound had seemed to come. It was the wildest sort of shooting, and the next instant I realised the folly of it. A pistol cracked in reply and a bullet went whistling over my head. This time I saw the flash—almost directly ahead of me and nowhere near the spot from which I thought the sound had come. As the pistol flashed, I fired at the flash. The sergeant made no reply, and I was just wondering whether I had been lucky enough to get him, when he fired at me again, this time from my right. Yet I had not heard a sound, and the man must have moved as noiselessly as a cat. No doubt he had taken off his boots. But two could play at that game, I told myself, and cautiously removed my own boots, got to my feet, and began moving in the direction of the wireless room.

I found the wall of the building and edged my way carefully along it, but the sergeant must have had the eyes of a cat, for two shots came unpleasantly near, and again I flung myself on the ground and lay still, watching for the flash of his pistol. It came—yards away from the spot where I had expected it—and I fired three more rapid shots. I heard a scream of pain. "Got him!" I told myself, sprang to my feet and ran in the direction from which the scream had come. But I had underestimated the cunning of a madman. I had only taken a few steps before another bullet, fired from somewhere behind me, whistled past my ear, and once more I flattened myself, calling myself all manner of names for having been so easily fooled. The sergeant had guessed that if he screamed I should jump to the conclusion that I had hit him, go running forward—just as I had done—and offer him an easy target, and if it had been just a little less dark his ruse would almost certainly have succeeded.

That nerve-racking duel in the darkness must have lasted for the best part of an hour. All the time my chief object was to find my way back into the wireless room. Once there, I felt,

I should be fairly safe from the sergeant's shooting and could get on with the business of sending out my message for help. But the trouble was to get there. It almost seemed that the sergeant knew what I was aiming at and was determined to prevent it. Every time I thought that I was near enough to make a dash for it and the sergeant was well away on the other side of the courtyard, his pistol would flash between me and the door, and how he failed to hit me I have never been able to understand. He must have been a very poor shot with a pistol. Not once did I get a glimpse of him. He moved from place to place with amazing speed and in absolute silence, and I never had the least idea from which direction the next shot was coming. Several times more he tried the ruse of screaming when I fired, but I was not to be caught like that a second time.

At last I managed it. The sergeant fired at me from somewhere on my right, and this time, instead of firing back, I ran straight for the door of the wireless room, flung it open, slipped inside and slammed it just as he fired a couple more shots, which chipped pieces off the brickwork beside the doorway. I locked the door and jammed a wedge of wood beneath it to make sure that he would not get into the room without my having time to drop him, and then, crouching down beside the shattered window, I watched for his next shot. I must have waited half an hour without hearing or seeing anything; then, hoping that the sergeant had abandoned the battle, I turned my attention to the wireless apparatus and again began sending out my message.

I was soon to learn, however, that the sergeant had not the least intention of abandoning the battle. I had just left the wireless apparatus and was crawling towards the window, when I heard the rat-tat-tat of a machine gun, and the room was swept by a hail of bullets. At the first burst of firing the wireless apparatus was smashed to pieces, but as I could not in any case have ventured to use it again so long as the sergeant had his machine gun, the loss was of no importance. As a matter of fact, there was nothing I could venture to do but remain where I was, crouching beneath the window, and hope that the sergeant would soon tire of his new amusement. Provided I stayed where I was, he could do me no damage; and as I certainly did not intend exposing myself to take a shot at him, we were both quite safe. What would happen when daylight came was a question which I did not attempt to answer. I was a crack shot with a pistol, and if once I got a glimpse of the sergeant, I could promptly settle the whole



business ; but if he persisted with his machine gun, I should never get a glimpse of him, and as far as I could see there was nothing to prevent his keeping me shut up in the wireless room as long as it pleased him to do so. I pinned my faith to my wireless message. If that had been picked up, help would be along before very long, and in the meantime there was nothing to be done but sit tight and keep my head out of harm's way.

All through the night the sergeant was busy with the machine gun. Every few minutes there would be a sharp burst of firing and the room would be swept by bullets, and in the intervals I could hear him cursing and shouting and laughing and calling out to his companion details of the terrible havoc he was working among the women who were attacking the fort.

As dawn began to break, the firing ceased. The sergeant, no doubt, realised that as soon as it was light I should have a shot at him, and was somewhere under cover, waiting for me to show myself. I decided that he would have to wait a long time, and began to puzzle my brains to find some way of out-witting him.

I was still trying to think out some scheme when I caught the faint hum of a distant aeroplane. Instantly my whole mind was concentrated on listening. The hum grew louder, faded, grew louder again, reaching me only intermittently, so that at one moment I was telling myself that my wireless message had been received and help was on the way, and the next that I had imagined the hum of the aeroplane and might as well face the fact that if I was to get out of Fort Boura alive I should have to do it without help from any one.

Gradually, however, the hum became more distinct and developed into a sustained drone ; a few minutes later it was a roar ; and as I peered up at the sky, taking care to keep my head below the level of the window, I saw an aeroplane, flying very low, sweep across my field of vision. I saw it several times and came to the conclusion that the pilot was circling over the fort, no doubt having a good look at the place before venturing to land.

Suddenly a shot rang out, followed by another and another. I got to my knees and took a quick glance through the window. Standing in the middle of the courtyard was the sergeant, rifle in hand, and as the aeroplane came roaring over the fort again, I saw him raise his rifle and take careful aim at the machine. I did not waste a second. I drew my pistol and fired. The sergeant gave a scream of pain—genuine enough this time, I

was quite sure—dropped his rifle and collapsed on the ground. I flung open the door, hurried across to where he was lying, satisfied myself that he was wounded, as I had intended that he should be, in the arm, and then ran as fast as I could across the courtyard and out through the gates. As I reached the gates, I saw the aeroplane come to rest, and the next moment the pilot was over the side and hurrying forward to meet me.

I told him briefly what had happened. He said that my message had been picked up at Ghardaia and he had been sent to see what the trouble was. Since the trouble was so serious, the sooner he got back to Ghardaia and reported the matter the better, and we would set off at once.

"*Nom de Dieu*—that message!" he laughed. "For a long time they could make nothing out of it and the Commandant was furious. You're not a wireless operator, are you?"

I assured him that I was not.

"That's lucky for you," he said. "If you'd been a wireless operator and had sent out a jigsaw puzzle of a message like that one, they'd have been sure to shoot you for it."

I told him about the sergeant, and insisted that we must take him along to Ghardaia with us. Before I had finished speaking, however, there came a scream from inside the fort. We both swung round, and out through the gateway, screaming, waving his arms, foaming at the mouth, and running faster than I thought it possible for any man to run, came the sergeant.

"The women!" he shrieked. "The women! The women!"

He rushed past us, without giving us a glance, his glazed eyes staring straight ahead.

"*Cafard*," remarked the pilot.

I nodded.

"There's only one cure for that," he added, drew his pistol and fired.

The sergeant collapsed on the sand and lay still. A couple of minutes later the plane took off and we were heading for Ghardaia.

# CASANOVA'S ESCAPE FROM VENICE

ANONYMOUS

CASANOVA, whose Christian name was John James, and who thought proper to add "de Seingalt" to his surname, was by birth a Venetian, but claimed to be descended from the ancient Spanish house of Palafox. Talent seems to have been largely bestowed upon his family; his two younger brothers, Francis and John Baptist, attained a high reputation as painters, and the latter is also known as a writer upon pictorial art. John James was born at Venice in 1725; studied at Padua, and distinguished himself by his precocious abilities, and his rapid progress in learning. His wit and conversational powers made him a favourite guest among the patricians of his native city. He was designed for the Church, and had the prospect of rising in it, but his dissipated habits and social intrigues marred his fortunes, and even brought imprisonment upon him.

After a variety of adventures, he embarked in 1743 for Constantinople, where he formed an acquaintance with the celebrated Count Bonneval. A quarrel at Corfu compelled him to return to Venice. There for a while he gained subsistence as a violin player. By a lucky chance he acquired the friendship of a rich and powerful Venetian. He happened to be present one day when the senator Bragadino was struck by a fit. Casanova boldly prohibited the use of the medicine which the physicians had prescribed, and by his own skill succeeded in recovering the patient. The grateful Bragadino took him into his house, and thenceforth seems to have almost considered him as a son. But the unsteadiness of Casanova stood in the way of his permanent happiness. He was again under the necessity of quitting his native place, and successively other cities which he visited, and he spent some years

in wandering over Italy and visiting Paris, devoting his time chiefly to pleasure and to gaming.

Again Casanova found his way back to Venice, where his converse and social powers procured for him a hearty welcome. But he did not long remain in safety. The malice of an enemy, aided by his own culpable imprudence, at length brought him under the severe lash of the Venetian government. His dissolute character undoubtedly justified suspicion. He confesses with shameless candour that he was anything but pious, and that there was not a more determined libertine in Venice. It was, however, no love of morality that prompted the proceedings against him. Among the many individuals whom he had offended by his tongue, his pen, and his ribaldry, there happened to be one of the state inquisitors, and that worthy personage availed himself of his office to take vengeance on the offender. Convenient witnesses were not difficult to be found in Venice. Three men came forward as Casanova's accusers, and in their depositions they mingled a small portion of truth with much absurd falsehood. They swore that he ate meat on the prohibited days, and that he went to mass only to hear the music—two charges which no doubt were true. Their inventions, however, were more formidable than their facts. They swore vehemently that he was suspected of freemasonry; that the large sums lost by him in gaming, he obtained by selling to foreign ambassadors the state secrets, which he artfully wormed out of his patrician friends, and that he believed only in the devil, in proof of which last accusation they urged, that when he lost his money at play, he never, as all good Christians did, gave way to execrations against his Satanic majesty. His addiction to magical and cabalistical studies was also adduced as evidence of his heretical guilt.

On the morning of the 25th of July 1755 the head of the Venetian police entered the chamber of Casanova, roused him from sleep, demanded his books and papers, and bade the astonished man rise and follow him. When he was told he was arrested by order of the tribunal of the state inquisition, he acknowledges that, on hearing that formidable and terrible name, he was overpowered, and that his wonted courage gave place to the most implicit obedience. Whilst the officer was securing the manuscripts and books, Casanova had his hair dressed, and put on a silken suit, as though he had been going to a bail instead of a prison. The papers

and volumes—among the latter of which were his cabalistic books—being collected, he quitted the chamber with the head of the police, and was surprised to find that more than thirty policemen were in waiting.

“Is it not,” he sarcastically observes, “extraordinary, that in England, where courage is innate, one man is considered sufficient to arrest another, while in my country, where cowardice has set up her home, thirty are required for the purpose? Probably a coward is still more one when he attacks than when he is attacked, and that makes the person assaulted bolder. The truth is, in Venice one man is often seen opposing twenty *shirri*: he gives them a good beating, and escapes.”

Four only of the officers were retained by the chief, who proceeded in a gondola to his dwelling with the prisoner, and locked him up in a room, where he remained four hours. On his return, he informed Casanova that he was directed to convey him to the Camerotti—cells which are known also by the name of I Plombi or The Leads, from their being immediately under the leaden roof of the state prison. This prison was opposite to the ducal palace, on the canal called Rio di Palazzo, and was connected with it by a covered bridge, which was emphatically denominated the *Bridge of Sighs*.

On reaching his destination, Casanova was presented to the secretary of the inquisitors, who merely cast a glance on him, and said, “It is he; secure him well.” He was then led up into a dirty garret, about six yards long and two broad, lighted through a hole in the roof. He supposed that he was to be confined there; but he was not to be so leniently dealt with. The jailor applied a large key to a strong, iron-bound door about three feet and a half high, in the centre of which was a grated hole 8 inches square. While the jailor was doing this, the prisoner’s attention was engaged upon a singular machine, made of iron, which was fixed in the wall.

Its use was explained to him in a tone of levity accompanied by laughter, as though there had been some excellent joke in the matter. It was an instrument, similar to the Spanish garotte, for strangling those who were condemned by the cruel inquisitors. After having received this consolatory explanation, he was ushered into his cell, which he could not enter without stooping till he was nearly bent double. The door was closed on him, and he was asked through the grating what he would have to eat. The sudden calamity which had befallen him had deadened his appetite and soured his temper,

and he sullenly replied that he had not yet thought about what he would have. The question was not repeated; he was left alone, listened to the keeper locking door after door, and then leaned against the grating in confused and gloomy meditation.

When he was a little recovered from the first shock, Casanova began to explore his dungeon. It was so low that he was obliged to stoop as he groped along, and there was neither bed, chair, nor table in it. There was nothing but a shelf, on which he deposited the silk mantle, hat, plume, and other finery in which he had so unseasonably arrayed himself. The place was involved in all but utter darkness. There was indeed a window, or rather aperture, of two feet square, but it was ingeniously contrived to admit the smallest possible quantity of light. Not only was it thickly checkered by broad iron bars, but immediately above it was a beam of eighteen inches in diameter, which crossed before the opening in the roof.

The heat now became so intolerable, that it drove him to the grating in the door, where he could also rest by leaning on his elbows. From this loop-hole he could see droves of rats—to his imagination as large as rabbits—running about the garret, and even coming up close to the grating. The sight made him shudder, for rats were his aversion, and he hastily shut the wicket. Hour after hour passed away, and no one came near him. He began to feel the misery of solitude, and though he had no desire for food, he was pained by the neglect which left him without it. As the day advanced, his passions rose almost to madness; he howled, stamped, cursed, and screamed for more than an hour. No notice whatever was taken of him; and at length, it being pitch-dark, he tied a handkerchief round his head, and stretched himself on the floor. There he lay for some time, his mind distracted with contending thoughts and emotions, till sleep brought him a welcome relief.

*He had slept for three hours, when he was aroused by the midnight bell. Stretching out his hand for a handkerchief, it met another, which was of icy stiffness and coldness. His hair stood on end, all his faculties were palsied by fear, and for some minutes he was unable to move. Recovering himself a little, he thought that his imagination might have deceived him. He extended his hand once more, and still the frozen hand was there. The idea now occurred to him, that a corpse had been placed by his side while he slept! A third time*

he stretched out his hand to ascertain whether his conjecture was right, and in doing this he moved his left arm, and discovered that he had been terrified by his own hand, which was rendered cold and rigid by his having lain on it for some hours. In itself the discovery was laughable enough ; but instead of enlivening him, it rather suggested the gloomiest reflections. He saw himself in a place where, if what was false seemed true, truth itself became a dream, where reason lost half her powers, and where the fancy fell a prey to delusive hopes or fearful despondencies. He began to be distrustful of the reality of everything which presented itself to his senses or his mind.

With the return of day hope revived in the breast of Casanova. He anticipated his immediate liberation ; and with a spirit which proved that he was scarcely worthy of freedom, lay meditating terrible schemes of revenge. His cogitations were interrupted by the coming of the jailer, who sneeringly asked him whether he had time enough to decide upon what he should eat. This time, seemingly out of bravado, he ordered an ample supply of different articles of food. In a short time the jailer came again, and expressed his wonder that his prisoner had not asked for a bed and some furniture ; “ for,” said he, “ if you imagine that you will be here only one night, you are much mistaken ! ” He then handed a pencil and paper to Casanova, who gave him a list of what he should want. The jailer, on its being read to him, declared that books, ink, paper, looking-glass, and razors must be omitted, as they were forbidden things. He required money for the provisions, and Casanova gave him one of three sequins, which was all his present wealth. At noon the furniture and the food were brought, and he was desired to mention what he would have for the morrow, as the keeper could visit him only once a day. He was informed, likewise, that the secretary would send him books more fitting than those in the list, as the latter belonged to the prohibited class.

On Casanova desiring that his thanks might be conveyed to the secretary for having given him a room to himself, instead of placing him with such rascals as he supposed to be the inmates of these dungeons, the surprised jailer, who at first thought the speech was in jest, assured him that none but people of condition were put there, and that far from being a favour, his insulated condition was intended as an

aggravation of punishment. "The fellow was right," says Casanova, "as I learned some days afterwards but too well. I then learned that a man who is alone in his confinement, without the power of employing himself, in a cell nearly dark, and where he only sees once a day the person who brings him food, and in which he cannot even walk about upright, becomes the most miserable of living creatures; he may at last even long for the company of a murderer, a madman, or even a bear. Solitude in these prisons brings despair; but none know that who have not had the experience."

Drawing his table towards the grating, for the sake of the gleam of light that entered there, Casanova sat down to his repast; an ivory spoon was his only substitute for a knife and fork. He had, however, little occasion for carving implements. Long fasting and anxiety had taken away his appetite, and he could not swallow more than a spoonful of soup. Seated in his arm-chair, he passed the whole of the day in feverish expectation of the promised books. At night sleep was banished from his couch by a combination of circumstances: rats in the adjacent garret were persevering and noisy in their gambols; the clock of St. Mark's tower, nigh at hand, was as audible as though it had been in the cell; and he was overrun and tormented by myriads of fleas, which, he says, almost sent him into convulsions. At daybreak Lorenzo, the jailer, appeared, ordered the cell to be swept out, placed the victuals on the table, and produced two large books, which were sent by the secretary. Casanova wished to go into the garret, but his favour was refused. When he had eaten his soup, he examined the books by the help of the light which passed through the grating. They were not of a nature to captivate a man like him, or indeed any one but a cracked-brained fanatic. One bore the title of *The Mystic City of God*, by Maria of Jesus, called Agreda; the other was a work written by a Jesuit, to inculcate a particular veneration for the heart of the Saviour. *The Mystic City* was a wild rhapsody, the production of a nun whose intellect was evidently disordered by ascetic practices and visionary contemplation. Having nothing else to beguile the tedious hours with, Casanova persisted for a whole week in reading it, and there was some danger of his becoming as mad as the writer. "I felt," says he, "the influence of the disorder which the nun of Agreda had engrafted on a mind depressed by melancholy and bad food. I smile now when I recall my fantastic dreams. If I had possessed pen and paper, a work might



have been produced in the prisons of the Camerotti, more extraordinary than that which Signor Cavalli had sent me. Such a work can overset a man's reason, if, like me, he were a captive in the Camerotti, and deprived of every employment and mental occupation."

In nine days Casanova's stock of money was exhausted; and when Lorenzo asked to whom he should apply for more, he was told to no one. This was unpleasant news to the jailer, who was fond of pelf, and doubtless took care to remunerate himself liberally for acting as purveyor to whose whom he held in custody. On the following morning he announced to the prisoner that the tribunal would allow about fifteen shillings weekly for his subsistence; and he proposed to lay out the sum for him, keep an account, and return any overplus at the month's end. This arrangement was acceded to by the captive. In the present condition of Casanova, the allowance was more than sufficient; for his health had now begun to give way, and he had little inclination to eat. The burning sun of the dog-days, beating on the leaden roof, converted his cell into a kind of vapour bath. He was obliged to remain wholly unclothed, and as he sat in his arm-chair the perspiration ran down on both sides of him. Fever next came on, and he took to his bed; but he suffered in silence. In the course of two or three days, Lorenzo, who does not appear to have been at bottom an inhuman man, and who, besides, had an interest in keeping him alive, discovered the illness of his prisoner, and applied for medical assistance. It was granted. "You will be astonished," said he, "to hear of the bounty of the tribunal, for you shall have a doctor, surgeon, and medicines, without its costing you anything."

A physician was introduced by the jailer, but Casanova declared that to his physician and his confessor he would not open his lips in the presence of witnesses. Lorenzo at first refused to leave them together, but was finally obliged to yield. Ill as he was, the prisoner still retained a portion of his satirical spirit. "If you wish to get well," said the doctor, "you must banish your melancholy." "Write a receipt for that purpose," said the patient, "and bear it to the only apothecary who can prepare a dose of it for me. Signor Cavalli, the secretary, is the fatal doctor, who prescribed for me *The Heart of Jesus* and the *Mystic City*; those works have reduced me to this condition." By the care of his

medical attendant, who also lent him Boethius to read, and obtained from the secretary a promise of other books, the health of the prisoner was speedily improved. "Nothing now tormented me," says he, "but heat, vermin, and ennui; for I could not read Boethius eternally."

A slight favour was now granted to Casanova by the pity or the policy of his jailer. He was permitted to enter the garret while his cell was being set in order. During the eight or ten minutes which were thus occupied, he walked rapidly up and down, as much for the purpose of scaring away his enemies the rats, as for the sake of exercise. Casanova prudently rewarded the jailer for what he had already done, and thus tempted him to do more. When Lorenzo on the same day came to settle his accounts, "there remained," says Casanova, "a balance of about five-and-twenty shillings in my favour, but I gave it to him, telling him that he might have masses said for it; he thanked me as if he were the priest who was to say them. At the end of each month I repeated this gift, but I never saw any receipt from a priest."

From day to day Casanova continued to flatter himself that the morrow would set him free. When repeated failures had weakened his confidence of immediate liberation, he took up the hope that some term of imprisonment had originally been fixed; and it struck him that the term would probably expire on the 1st of October, that being the day on which the state inquisitors were changed. On the night preceding that day, his feelings would not suffer him to sleep. The morning for which he had so ardently longed brought him nothing but disappointment. Nearly the whole of the following week was passed in paroxysms of rage and despair. When he subsided into a calmer mood, and was capable of reflecting, he began to think it probable he was to be confined for life. This idea did not, however, bring back his fits of fury or despondency. "The fearful thought," says he, "excited a laugh, but nothing more; I resolved to free myself, or perish in the attempt." Thenceforth his whole attention was turned to that one great purpose. It is true that he had neither gold to bribe with, nor the power of corresponding and concerting with his friends, nor weapons, nor tools, but still he was not to be deterred from his enterprise; for in his opinion there was no object a man might not obtain by incessantly devoting his thoughts to it.

While his mind was occupied in pondering upon the means to carry his resolve into effect, a circumstance occurred,

which showed that the idea of recovering liberty was so predominant as to leave no room for that of danger. He was standing in his cell on the 1st of November, looking up to the window in the roof, and scanning the large beam that crossed it. All at once he saw the massive timber shake, bend to the right, and then resume its place, while he himself lost his balance. He knew that this was caused by the shock of an earthquake, and he inwardly rejoiced. In about five minutes the shock was renewed. He could no longer contain himself ; he exultingly exclaimed aloud, "Another, another, great God ! but stronger !" The earthquake which he felt was the same that shook the city of Lisbon into a heap of ruins. That he might escape by the destruction of the prison was the sole thought that flashed upon his brain ; it never entered into his head that he might be crushed by the falling pile.

The monotony of Casanova's existence was now somewhat relieved by his having a companion in misfortune. The first was a youth named Maggiorino, who had been valet to a count, and was sent hither for having gained the affections of his master's daughter. He was an agreeable, honest young man, but madly in love ; and all his sighs and tears seemed to be vented more on his mistress's account than his own. On the unlucky lover coming in, Casanova lent him his own mattress to sleep on. Lorenzo brought one the next morning, and informed the new prisoner that a small sum was allowed for his support. Casanova, however, told the jailer that he would share his provisions with Maggiorino, and that he might keep the money to have masses said weekly for his soul. Lorenzo was so enchanted by this generosity, that he gave the donor leave to walk for half an hour every day up and down the gallery. Poor Maggiorino did not long remain with Casanova. He was removed to another part of the prison, where daylight never entered, its place being supplied by an oil lamp. There he continued five years, at the expiration of which period he was banished for ten.

Casanova was sorry for the loss of his companion, and for a short time his spirits were depressed. In a few days the vacancy was transiently filled up by a less pleasing character. The stranger was a thin, stooping, shabbily-dressed man of about fifty, with a sinister expression of countenance. He feasted at Casanova's expense on the first day ; on the second, when Lorenzo asked for money to purchase food, the newcomer declared that he had not a single farthing. Lorenzo

coolly replied, "Oh, very well! then you shall have a pound and a half of ship-biscuit and excellent water"; and with this humble fare he provided him. Seeing that his fellow-captive seemed low-spirited, Casanova offered to let him share in his repasts, at the same time telling him that he was very imprudent to come there entirely without money. "I have money," he replied; "but one must not let these harpies know it." He was a usurer, and had attempted to defraud a nobleman, who had unwarily entrusted him with a considerable sum. He had been cast in a suit for the recovery of the deposit, and was to be held in durance till he made restitution, and paid the costs. After he had been imprisoned for four days, he was summoned before the secretary, and in his hurry he slipped on Casanova's shoes instead of his own. In about half an hour he returned with a most woebegone look, took out of his own shoes two purses containing three hundred and fifty sequins, and went back to the secretary. Casanova saw no more of him. Stimulated, perhaps, by the threat of torture, the usurer had regained his liberty by parting with his idolised gold. Some months elapsed before he was succeeded by another tenant.

"On the 1st of January 1756," says Casanova, "I received a new year's gift. Lorenzo brought me a beautiful dressing-gown lined with fox-fur, a silken coverlid quilted with wool, and a case of bear-skin to put my feet in; for in proportion as my prison was hot in summer was it cold in winter. At the same time he informed me that six sequins monthly were placed at my disposal, and that I might buy what books and newspapers I pleased. He added that this present came from my friend and patron the patrician Bragadino. I begged of him some paper and a pencil, and wrote on it, 'My thanks for the clemency of the tribuna!, and the generosity of Signor Bragadino.' A person must have been in my situation to be able to appreciate the effect this had on me. In the fulness of my heart I pardoned my oppressors; indeed, I was nearly induced to give up all thoughts of escaping, so phant is man, alter misery has bowed him down and degraded him."

The feeling of submission to his fate was, however, only momentary. His mind was again incessantly employed in dwelling upon the subject of his intended flight. The garrulity of the jailer, who had an inordinate love of babbling, supplied him with some particulars relative to the prison, which ultimately proved useful. But it was from the leave to walk in the gallery that he derived the greatest advantage. At first

the favour was considered valuable only as affording him an enlarged space for exercise ; but it was not long before he began to imagine that he might turn it to better account. In the course of his brief visits to this spot, he discovered in a corner two chests, round which was a quantity of old lumber. One of the chests was locked ; that which was open contained feathers, paper, and twine, and a piece of what seemed to be smooth black marble, about an inch thick, three inches wide, and six inches long. Apparently without having settled what use he could make of it, he carried the stone to his cell, and hid it under his shirts.

Some time after this, while he was walking, his eyes rested on a bolt as thick as a thumb and eighteen inches in length, which he had more than once seen among the lumber ; and the thought suddenly struck him, that it might be converted into a tool and a weapon. He concealed it under his clothes and took it to his cell. He now examined more closely the supposed piece of marble, and was delighted to find that it was in reality a whet-stone. Quite uncertain as to what purpose he should apply the bolt, but with a vague hope that it might possibly be of service, Casanova set to work to point it. This was a wearisome task. He was nearly in the dark, held the stone in his hand because he had no place where he could fix it, and for want of oil was obliged to moisten it with spittle. For fourteen days he worked incessantly, till his left hand became one blister, and his right arm could not be moved without difficulty. He had, however, succeeded in converting the rusty bolt into an octangular stiletto, which might have done credit to a swordmaker's skill. When it was finished, he hid it in the straw of his arm-chair. Whether it would be employed in committing murder or giving freedom, or perhaps both, circumstances alone could decide.

After having pondered for five days on what was to be done, Casanova decided that to break through the floor of his cell was the only plan which afforded a chance of success. The state cells, in one of which he was immured, were in the roof, and were covered with plates of lead three feet square and about a line in thickness. They occupied the two opposite sides, eastern and western, of the building, four on the former side and three on the latter. The eastern cells were light, and would allow a man to stand upright in them, while the others were rendered low and dark by the beams which crossed the windows. The only access was through the gates of the Palace, the Bridge of Sighs, and the galleries, and the secretary

kept the key, which was daily returned to him by the jailer, after he had attended on the prisoners.

Casanova was aware that under his cell was the secretary's chamber, and that the chamber was open every morning. If by the help of the bedclothes he could descend unseen into it, he purposed to hide himself under the table of the tribunal, and watch an opportunity to sally forth. If, contrary to his expectations, he should find a sentinel in the room, he made up his mind to kill him. He could not, however, yet begin his work, for the cold was so intense, that when he grasped the iron his hands became frozen; and besides, for nineteen hours out of the twenty-four he was in complete darkness, the winter fogs at Venice being so thick, that even in the day-time he had not light enough to read by. He was therefore compelled to postpone till a more favourable season the commencement of his operations.

This compulsory delay, and the want of something to beguile the lagging hours, depressed his spirits. He again sunk into despondency. A lamp would have made him happy. He thought how he could supply the place of one. He required a lamp, wick, oil, flint and steel, and tinder, and he had not one of them all. By dint of contrivance he soon procured a part of them. An earthen pipkin, which he managed to conceal, was the lamp; the oil was saved from his salad; a wick he formed from cotton taken out of his bed; and a buckle in his girdle was converted into a steel. A flint, matches, and tinder were still deficient. These, too, his perseverance obtained. Pretending to have a violent tooth-ache, he prevailed on Lorenzo to give him a fragment of flint, for the purpose of being steeped in vinegar and applied to the tooth; and to prevent suspicion, he put three pieces of it into vinegar in the presence of the jailer. Sulphur he got by a similar stratagem. He was very opportunely attacked by an irritation of the skin, for which the article he stood in need of was one of the remedies prescribed.

But now for the tinder; to contrive a substitute for that was the work of three days. It at last occurred to him that he had ordered his tailor to stuff his silken vest under the arms with sponge, to prevent the appearance of stain. The clothes lay before him. "My heart beat," he says; the tailor might not have fulfilled my orders; I hesitated between fear and hope. It only required two steps, and I should be out of suspense; but I could not resolve on those two steps. At

last I advanced to where the clothes lay, and feeling unworthy of such a favour if I should find the sponge there, I fell on my knees and prayed fervently. Comforted by this, I took up the dress and found the sponge. I was no sooner in possession of it than I poured the oil into the pipkin, set the wick in, and the lamp was ready. It was no little addition to the pleasure this luxury afforded me, that I owed it entirely to my own ingenuity, and that I had violated one of the strictest laws of the prison. I dreaded the approach of night no longer."

The pleasure which he derived from this acquisition enabled him to bear with tolerable patience the necessary postponement of his great undertaking. Considering that during the riotous festivities of the Carnival he would be daily liable to have companions sent to him, he resolved not to begin his labours till the first Monday in Lent. But here he was staggered by another obstacle, which he had not hitherto taken into account. He had always manifested an eagerness to have his room swept, for the purpose of keeping down the vermin that annoyed him. But if he persisted in having this done, the jailer could not fail to discover the breach which the prisoner was making in the floor. He was therefore obliged to desire that the sweeping might be discontinued. For about a week Lorenzo humoured the prisoner, but he seems at last to have felt an undefined suspicion that something wrong was intended. He ordered the cell to be swept and the bed removed, and he brought in a light, on pretence of ascertaining whether the work had been thoroughly done. But his vigilance was thrown away; he was no match for the wily captive. Next morning he found Casanova in bed, and was greeted with "I have coughed so violently that I have burst a blood-vessel." Then, holding up a handkerchief which he had stained by purposely cutting his thumb, the speaker added, "See how I have bled! Pray, send for a physician!" A doctor came, prescribed, listened to his complaint against the jailer, assented to its justice, and directed that the broom should thenceforth be banished.

Having thus secured a clear field for his operations, he moved his bed out of the alcove, lighted the lamp, and set vigorously to work on the floor with his stiletto. The deals were sixteen inches broad, and he began to make the hole at the point where two of them joined. At the outset the chips were no bigger than grains of corn, but they soon increased to respectable splinters. After having worked for six hours

he desisted, and gathered the chips into a napkin, intending to throw them behind the lumber in the garret. When by dint of much toil he had penetrated through this plank, he found beneath it another of equal thickness, which was succeeded by a third. Three weeks were consumed in getting through these multiplied impediments. When he had conquered them, he came to a still more formidable obstacle—a sort of pavement, composed of small pieces of marble. On this his stiletto could make no impression. His resourceful brain, however, discovered a method of surmounting this difficulty. Taking the hint from a well-known proceeding ascribed to Hannibal, he moistened the mortar with vinegar, and softened it so much, that at the end of four days he was enabled to remove the pieces of marble. There was yet another plank to cut through, and as the hole was already ten inches deep, this part of his task was exceedingly troublesome and laborious.

Prone on the ground, quite naked, and streaming with perspiration, his lamp standing lighted in the hole, Casanova had been working at the last plank for three hours of a sultry day in June, when he was startled by the rattling of bolts in the anterooms. He had barely time to blow out the lamp, push the bed back into its place, and throw upon it the mattress and bedding, before Lorenzo entered. The jailer brought with him a prisoner, and congratulated the tenant of the cell on having such a companion. The new-comer exclaimed, "Where am I? and where am I to be confined? What a heat, and what a smell! With whom am I to be imprisoned?" As soon as the captives could see each other, a mutual recognition took place. The person whom Lorenzo had installed in the cell was Count Fanarola, an agreeable and honourable man of middle age, who was committed for some trifling remarks which he had been so imprudent as to make in a public place. Casanova, who was well acquainted with the count, confided to him the secret of his project, and was encouraged to persevere. Fanarola was liberated in the course of a few days.

Left once more alone, Casanova resumed his toilsome occupation. It was protracted by a circumstance which he had feared might happen, but was unable to prevent. When he had made a small perforation in the last plank, he found that the room beneath was, as he had supposed, the secretary's; but he found also that he had made his aperture just over a large cross-beam, which would hinder his descent. He was



therefore obliged to widen the hole on the other side, so as to keep clear of this impediment. In the meantime he carefully stopped up the small perforation with bread, that the light of his lamp might not be perceived. It was not till the 23rd of August 1756 that he brought his labour to a close. All was ready for breaking through ; but he determined to postpone his escape till the 27th, the day after that being St. Augustine's day, when he knew that the great council met, and that in consequence there would be no person in the Bussola, which adjoined the chamber through which he must pass.

Though the delay was dictated by prudence, Casanova had reason to repent of it. " On the 25th of August an event happened," says he, " which even now makes me shudder at the recollection of it. I heard the bolts drawn, and a death-like fear seized me ; the beating of my heart shook my body, and I threw myself almost fainting into my arm-chair. Lorenzo, still in the garret, said to me through the grating in a tone of pleasure, ' I wish you joy of the news I bring.

" I imagined he had brought me my freedom, and I saw myself lost ; the hole I had made would effectually debar me from liberty. Lorenzo entered, and desired me to follow him. I offered to dress myself, but he said it was unnecessary, as he was only going to remove me from this detestable cell to another quite new and well-lighted, with two windows, from which I could overlook half Venice, and could stand upright in. I was nearly beside myself. I asked for some vinegar, and begged him to thank the secretary, but to entreat him to leave me where I was. Lorenzo asked me if I were mad to refuse to exchange a hell for a paradise ; and offering his arm to aid me, desired my bed, books, etc., to be brought after. Seeing it was in vain to oppose any longer, I rose and left my cage, and with some small satisfaction heard him order my chair to be brought with me ; for in the straw of that was my stiletto hidden. Would it had been possible for my toilsome work in the floor to have accompanied me also !

" Leaning on the shoulder of Lorenzo, who tried by laughing to enliven me, I passed through two long galleries, then over three steps into a large, light hall, and passed through a door at the left end of it into a corridor twelve feet long and two broad. The two grated windows in it presented to the eye a wide extensive view of a great part of the town ; but I

was not in a situation to rejoice at the prospect. The door of my destined prison was in the corner of this corridor, and the grating of it was opposite to one of the windows that lighted the passage, so that the prisoner could not only enjoy a great part of the prospect, but also feel the refreshment which the cool air of the open window afforded him—a balsam for any creature in that season of the year ; but I could not think of all this at that moment, as the reader may easily conceive. Lorenzo left me and my chair, into which I threw myself, and he told me he would go for my bed.”

Casanova remained motionless in his chair, as though he were petrified. His mind was agitated by a variety of feelings, in which disappointment and alarm were predominant. He had not only to lament that his hopes were blighted on the very eve of their being realised, but he had reason to fear that his punishment would be much increased. Clemency to state criminals was not an attribute of the Venetian government. He already seemed to himself to be condemned to dwell for life in the dark and silent dungeons called *the wells*, where, far beneath the level of the waves, the victim pined away existence amidst swarms of vermin, oozing waters, and noisome exhalations. At last, however, by a powerful mental effort, he in some measure recovered his composure.

Shortly after his removal, two under-jailers brought his bed, and went back for the remainder of his things. They did not return ; and for more than two hours he was kept in suspense. At length hurried footsteps and words of wrath were heard in the passage, and Lorenzo rushed into the apartment, hot with rage, and pouring forth a torrent of imprecations and blasphemies. He demanded the axe with which the hole had been made, the name of the faithless servant who had furnished it, and ordered his prisoner to be searched. Casanova, who knew his man, met him with scorn and defiance. The captive, the bed, and the mattress were examined, but nothing was found ; luckily the under side of the arm-chair, into which the stiletto was thrust, was not looked into. “ So you won’t tell me where the tools are that you used to cut through the floor ? ” said Lorenzo. “ I’ll see if you’ll confess to others.” Casanova answered with provoking coolness, “ If it be true that I have cut through the floor, I shall say that I had the tools from yourself, and that I have given them back to you.” This was too much for the jailer to bear ; he began literally to howl, ran his head against the wall, stamped and danced like a madman, and finally

darted from the room. The threat which Casanova had thrown out produced the effect which he probably expected from it. Lorenzo had the hole secretly filled up, and took special care to say nothing about it to his suspicious and vindictive masters.

On quitting the cell, Lorenzo closed all the windows, so as to prevent the prisoner from inhaling a single breath of fresh air. The place was like an oven, and to sleep was rendered impossible. As he durst not report to his superiors the offence which had been committed, the jailer seems to have determined to revenge himself by making the culprit as uncomfortable as he could. In the morning sour wine, stinking water, tainted meat, and hard bread were brought to Casanova; and when he requested that the window might be opened, no answer was vouchsafed. The walls and the floor were examined with an iron bar by an under-keeper; and as the inmate had formerly objected to sweeping, his cell was left undisturbed by a broom. The heat increased to such a degree, that Casanova began to think he should be suffocated; the perspiration dropped from him so profusely that he could not read or walk about; and he could neither eat nor drink of the disgusting food with which he was supplied. The same fare was furnished on the second day, and the same silence maintained by the malicious jailer. The prisoner grew furious, and determined that he would stab his tormentor on the following day; but prudence, or a better feeling, induced him to relinquish his purpose, and he contented himself with assuring Lorenzo, that as soon as he regained his liberty he would certainly throttle him.

For a whole week Lorenzo kept up this system of annoyance. On the eighth day Casanova, in the presence of the under-turnkeys, imperiously demanded the monthly account, and called him a cheat. This demand seems to have awakened the jailer to a sense of his own interest. If he persisted in playing the tyrant, it was to be feared that no more sequins would be forthcoming for masses. His avarice got the better of his spleen, and he became tractable. A favourable opportunity for making his peace occurred at the moment. Bragadino sent to the prisoner a basket of lemons, which gift, with a chicken and a bottle of excellent water, Lorenzo presented to Casanova along with the account, ordering at the same time the windows to be opened. Conciliated by this unexpected change, Casanova desired that the balance of the *account might be given to Lorenzo's wife, with the exception*

of a sequin, which was to be divided among his underlings. When they were alone he said calmly, "You have told me that you are indebted to me for the tools you made the great opening in the floor of your cell with; I am not, therefore, curious to know anything more of that; but who gave you the lamp?" "You yourself," was the reply; "you gave me oil, flint, and sulphur; the rest I had already." "That is true; can you as easily prove that I helped you to the tools to break through the floor?" "Just as easily; I got everything from you." "Grant me patience! what do I hear? Did I give you an axe?" "I will confess all; but the secretary must be present." "I will ask no further, but believe you. Be silent, and remember I am a poor man, and have a family." He left the cell, holding his hands to his face.

Though Lorenzo was obliged to be silent with respect to Casanova's attempt, he adopted precautions to prevent another from being made. Every day one of the attendants searched the floor and walls of the apartment with an iron bar. But the prisoner laughed at this useless care. It was neither through the walls nor the floor that he was planning to escape. He well knew that in those quarters nothing could be done. His new scheme was to find the means of opening a correspondence with the prisoner over his head, whom he would furnish with the stiletto, for the purpose of making an aperture, through which he himself might ascend into the upper cell. On reaching that cell, Casanova purposed to break another hole in the ceiling, get out upon the roof with his fellow-labourer, and either find some outlet, or let themselves down by the help of their linen and bedclothes.

It is obvious that the success of such a project was so extremely doubtful, that it seemed to be the height of absurdity to reckon upon it. At the very outset, the commencing and carrying on an intercourse with the prisoner above-stairs, appeared to present an almost insuperable difficulty. If that were surmounted, there was the chance that his confederate might be cowardly or treacherous, there was the hourly risk that their operations would be detected, and there was the danger which they must encounter in effecting their descent from the lofty summit of the prison. But the longing to recover freedom can inspire the captive with hope, though hope be lost. The first obstacle was unconsciously removed by Lorenzo himself. That worthy had an insatiable love of gold, and could not bear to see the money of the prisoners

pass into any other pockets than his own. Casanova satirically describes him, as being one who would have sold St. Mark himself for a dollar. The prisoner having desired him to purchase the works of Maffei, the jailer suggested that the expense might be saved by borrowing books from another captive, and lending his own in return. This suggestion was readily adopted by Casanova, who hoped that it might lead to a correspondence, which would forward his design. A volume of Wolff's writing was brought to him, in which he found a sheet of paper, containing a paraphrase in verse of a sentence from Seneca. He had neither pen nor pencil, but he nevertheless contrived to write some verses on the same paper, and a catalogue of his books on the last leaf of the volume. The nail of his little finger, shaped into a sort of pen, and some mulberry juice, were the materials which he employed.

An answer, in the Latin language, came on the morrow with the second volume. The writer, who was the inhabitant of the cell above Casanova's, stated himself to be a monk, by name Marino Balbi, and of a noble Venetian family; Count Andreas Asquino, of Udina, was his fellow-prisoner. Both of them offered the use of their books. In reply, Casanova gave an account of himself, which drew forth a second epistle from the monk. In the next book was a letter of sixteen pages, and at the back of the volume, paper, pen, and pencil. These invaluable articles the two prisoners had procured by bribing Nicolo, the under-keeper who attended on them.

Balbi, who had learned from Nicolo the particulars of the recent attempt to escape, was eager to know what were Casanova's present plans. At first Casanova hesitated to trust him, having conceived an unfavourable opinion of his character; but considering that he could not do without his assistance, he finally resolved to confide in him. The monk made some objections to the feasibility of the plan, which, however, were soon overruled. That Balbi might perforate the floor, it was necessary for him to have the stiletto; and Casanova was puzzled how to convey it to him. He at last hit upon a method. He directed Lorenzo to procure a large folio edition of a work which he specified, and which he thought would allow of the stiletto being concealed in the hollow, between the binding and the leather back. Unluckily the stiletto proved to be two inches longer than the volume, and Casanova was obliged to task his ingenuity to find a remedy for this defect.

"I told Lorenzo," he says, "that I was desirous of celebrating Michaelmas day with two great plates of macaroni, dressed with butter and Parmesan cheese, and that I wished to give one to the prisoner who had lent me his books. He answered that the same prisoner had expressed a wish to borrow my great book. I told him I would send it with the macaroni, and ordered him to procure me the largest dish he could; I would myself fill it. While Lorenzo went for the dish, I wrapped up the hilt in paper, and stuck it behind the binding. I was convinced that if I put a large dish of macaroni on the top of the book, Lorenzo's attention would be so occupied in carrying that safely, that he never would perceive the end of the iron projecting. I informed Balbi of this, and charged him to be particularly cautious to take the dish and book together. On Michaelmas day Lorenzo came with a great pan, in which the macaroni was stewed. I immediately added the butter, and poured it into both dishes, filling them up with grated Parmesan cheese; the dish for the monk I filled to the brim, and the macaroni swam in butter. I put the dish upon the volume, which was half as broad in diameter as the book was long, and gave them to Lorenzo, with the back of the book turned towards him, telling him to stretch out his arms, and to go slowly, that the butter might not run over the book. I observed him steadily; he could not turn his eyes away from the butter, which he feared to spill. He proposed to take the dish first, and then return for the book, but I told him by so doing my present would lose half its value; he consented to take both at last, observing that it would not be his fault if the butter ran over. I followed him with my eyes as far as I could, and soon heard Balbi cough three times, the concerted signal of the success of my stratagem."

Balbi now set to work with the stiletto. Though he was young and strong, he did not labour with the same spirit which had been displayed by Casanova, to whom he often wrote complaining of the toil that he had to encounter, and expressing his fears that it would be unavailing. As, however, the floor presented but comparatively few obstacles, he had advanced so far by the middle of October, that only the last plank remained to be cut through. To push in the ceiling was all that would then be requisite to open a passage, and this, of course, was not to be done till the moment arrived for their flight. But while Casanova was exulting in the idea

of speedily regaining his liberty, a formidable impediment was thrown in his way. He heard the outer door open, and instantly made the preconcerted signal to Balbi to stop working. Lorenzo entered, accompanied by two of his underlings and a prisoner, and apologised for being obliged to bring him a scoundrel as a companion. The person he thus described was a very ill-looking, small, thin man, apparently between thirty and forty, wearing a shabby dress and a round black wig. After having ordered a mattress for the newcomer, and informed him that tenpence a day was allowed for his support, the jailer took his leave.

The name of Casanova's unwelcome comrade was Sorodaci. He was a common informer, and a spy of the worst class, who was sent to prison for having deceived the council by false information, while at the same time he had betrayed his own cousin. He was intensely superstitious, his only vulnerable spot, and upon this Casanova worked. To wait till he was removed would have been to relinquish all hope of escape. The last night of October was fixed for the completion of the enterprise, as the inquisitors and their secretary annually visited some villages on the mainland on the 1st of November ; and Lorenzo, taking advantage of their absence, usually made himself so merry, that he did not rise till late the next morning to visit his prisoners. Casanova persuaded the wretched spy that the Holy Virgin would send an angel to release him, through an aperture in the ceiling, in the space of five or six days, and so thoroughly did the dupe fall into the trap prepared for him, that Balbi was enabled to pursue his labours undisturbed till the 31st, when all was ready.

The inquisitors and their secretary had set out for the mainland. Lorenzo had supplied the wants of the captives, and was preparing for his carousal, and the field was thus left clear for Casanova's operations. As the clock struck twelve, Balbi began his final attack on the floor ; and in a few minutes a piece of the last plank and the ceiling fell in, and was speedily followed by the worker himself. Casanova now took the stuletto, and leaving the monk with his companion, he himself passed into the upper cell to reconnoitre. At first sight he perceived that Count Asquino was not a man fitted for making perilous exertions. On being told how the escape was to be effected, the count, who was seventy years of age, replied that he had no wings, without which it would be impossible to descend from the roof. He candidly owned that he had not courage enough to face the peril which must

be encountered, and would therefore stay where he was, and pray for those who had more strength and fewer fears.

Casanova now examined the roof, and found it break so easily, that he doubted not of being able to make a practicable breach in less than an hour. Returning to his own cell, he cut up clothes, napkins, and sheets, and converted them all into a hundred feet of rope, the pieces of which he took special care to noose together in the firmest manner. He then packed up his clothes, his silk mantle, and some linen. The whole party then removed to the cell of the count. Desiring Balbi to get ready his package, Casanova set to work to enlarge the opening in the roof. On looking out, he became aware that the light of the moon and the fineness of the night would not allow of their entering upon their enterprise till a later hour. St. Mark's Place was full of people, some of whom could scarcely fail to see them scrambling about the roof. In three hours the moon would set, and they could then proceed. As money was an indispensable article, the loan of fifty sequins was requested from the count, who, however, would only lend them two, with which they were compelled to remain satisfied. The spy would not make the attempt to escape with them; his courage failed him, and Casanova gladly left him behind. The moon had now sunk below the horizon, and it was time to depart. But here we will give Casanova's own words:

"I placed on Balbi's shoulder the bundle of cord, and on the other his packet, and loaded myself in the same manner. We then dressed in our vest only, and with our hats on our heads, looked through the opening I had made. I went first. Notwithstanding the mist, every object was visible enough. Kneeling and creeping, I thrust my weapon between the joints of the lead plates; holding with one hand by that, and with the other by the plank on which the lead plate had lain, which I had removed, I raised myself on the roof. Balbi, in following me, grasped my band behind, so I resembled a beast of burden, which must draw as well as carry; in this manner I had to ascend a steep and slippery roof side. When we were half-way up this dangerous place, Balbi desired me to stop a moment, for that one of his bundles had fallen off, and had probably only rolled down to the gutter. My first thought was to give him a push that would send him after it, but Heaven enabled me to contain myself; the punishment would have fallen upon me as



well as him, for without his help I could do nothing. I asked if the bundle was gone ; and when I heard that it contained his black gown, two shirts, and a manuscript, I consoled him for its loss ; he sighed and followed me, still holding by my clothes.

" After I had climbed over about sixteen lead plates, I reached the ridge of the roof ; I set myself astride on it, and the monk imitated me. Our backs were turned towards the island of St. Georgio Maggiore, and two hundred steps before us was the cupola of St. Mark's, a part of the ducal palace, wherein the chapel of the Doge is more magnificent than any king's. Here we took off our bundles. He placed his ropes between his legs ; but on laying his hat upon them, it rolled down the roof and fell into the canal. He looked on this as a bad omen, and complained that he had now lost hat, gown, shirts, and manuscript ; but I remarked to him that it was fortunate the hat had fallen to the right and not to the left, for otherwise it would have alarmed the sentinel in the arsenal.

" After looking about me a little, I bid the monk remain quite still here till my return, and climbed along the roof, my dagger in my hand. I crept in this manner for an hour, trying to find a place to which I might fasten my rope to enable me to descend ; but all the places I looked down into were enclosed ones, and there were insuperable difficulties in getting to the canonica on the other side of the church ; yet everything must be attempted, and I must hazard it without allowing myself to think too long on the danger. But about two-thirds of the way down the side of the roof I observed a dormer window, which probably led to some passage, leading to the dwelling-places not within the limits of the prisons, and I thought I should find some of the doors going out of it open at daybreak. If any one should meet us, and take us for state prisoners, he would find, I determined, some difficulty in detaining us. With this consideration, with one leg stretched out towards the window, I let myself gently slide down till I reached the little roof of it that ran parallel to the great one, and set myself upon it. I then leaned over, and by feeling discovered it to be a window, with small round panes of glass cased in lead, behind a grating. To penetrate this required a file, and I had only my stiletto. Bitterly disappointed, and in great embarrassment, I seemed incapable of coming to a determination, when the clock of St. Mark's striking midnight awakened my fainting resolution. I remembered

that this sound announced the beginning of All Saints' Day: when misfortune drives a strong mind to devotion, there is always a little superstition mingled with it; that bell aroused me to action, and promised me victory. Lying on my stomach, and stretching over, I struck violently against the grating with my dagger in the hope of forcing it in. In a quarter of an hour four of the wooden squares were broken, and my hand grasped the wood-work; the panes of glass were speedily demolished, for I heeded not the cutting of my hand.

"I now returned to the top of the roof, and crept back to my companion. I found him in a dreadful rage, cursing me for having left him two hours; he at last thought I must have fallen over, and was about to return to his prison. He asked me what were my intentions. 'You will soon see,' I said; and packing our bundles on our necks, I bid him follow me. When we reached the roof of the window, I explained to him what I had done, and what I intended to do. I asked his advice as to the best mode of getting in at it. It would be easy for the first man, as the second would hold the rope; but what would this last one do? In leaping down from the window to the floor he might break a leg; for we knew nothing of the space between. The monk instantly proposed I should let him down first, and afterwards think how I should get in myself. I was sufficiently master of myself to conceal my indignation at this proposal, and to proceed to execute his wish. I tied a rope round my companion, and sitting astride of the window roof, let him down to the window, telling him to rest on his elbows on the roof, and to put his feet through the hole I had made. I then lay down again on the roof, and told him to be satisfied that I would hold the rope fast.

"Balbi came safely down upon the floor, untied himself, and I drew the rope back to me; but in doing this I found that the space from the window to the floor was ten times my arm's length; it was impossible, therefore, to jump this. Balbi called to me to throw the rope to him, but I took care not to follow his absurd and selfish counsel. I now determined on returning to the great roof, where I discovered a cupola at a place I had not yet been; it brought me to a stage laid with lead plates, and which had a trap-door covered with two folding shutters. I found here a tub full of fresh lime, building tools, and a tolerably long ladder; the latter, of course, attracted my particular attention. I tied my rope round one of

the rings, and climbing up the roof again, drew the ladder after me. The ladder I must contrive to put in at the window, and it was twelve times the length of my arm. Now I missed the help of the monk. I let the ladder down to the gutter, so that one end leaned against the window; the other stood in the gutter; I drew it up to me again as I leaned over, and endeavoured to get the end in at the window, but in vain; it always came over the roof; and the morning might come and find me here, and bring Lorenzo soon after it. I determined to slide down to the gutter, in order to give the ladder the right direction. This gutter of marble yielded me a resting-place, where I lay at length on it; and I succeeded in putting the ladder a foot into the window, which diminished its weight considerably. But it was necessary to push it in two feet more; I then should only have to climb back to the window roof, and by means of the line draw it entirely in. To effect this I was compelled to raise myself on my knees; while doing so they slipped off the gutter, and I lay with my whole breast and elbows upon it.

"I exerted all my strength to draw my body up again, and lay myself on the gutter. I had fortunately no trouble with the ladder; it was now three feet in the window, and did not move. As soon as I found that I lay firm, I endeavoured to raise my right knee up to the level of the gutter. I had nearly succeeded, when the effort gave me a fit of the cramp, as paralysing as it was painful. What a moment! I lay for two minutes motionless; at length the pain subsided, and I succeeded in raising one knee after the other upon the marble again; I rested a few minutes, and then pushed the ladder still farther into the window. Sufficiently experienced in the laws of equilibrium by this adventure, I returned to the window roof, and drawing the ladder entirely in, my companion received the end of it, and secured it; I then threw in the rope and bundle, and soon rejoined him: after brief congratulations, I felt about to examine the dark and narrow place we were in.

"We came to a grated window, which opened on my raising the latch. and we entered a large hall; we felt round the walls, and met with a table surrounded by arm-chairs. I at length found a window, opened the sash of it, and looked by starlight down a fearful depth; here was no descent by rope practicable. I returned to the place where we had left our things, and sat down in an arm-chair, where I was seized with such an invincible desire to sleep, that if I had been told it was

death I should have welcomed it; the feeling was indescribable. At the third hour the noise of the monk awoke me; he said my sleeping at such a time and place was incomprehensible; but Nature had overcome me. I, however, gained a little strength by my rest.

"I said as I arose that this was no prison, and that there must therefore be an exit somewhere. I searched till I found the large iron door, and opposite to it was a smaller one with a keyhole; I put my stiletto into it, and exclaimed, 'Heaven grant it may not be a cupboard!' After some efforts the lock yielded, and we entered a small room, in which was a table with a key upon it; I tried it; it opened, and I found myself in cupboards filled with papers, it being the archive-chamber. We ascended some steps, and passing through a glass door, entered the chancery of the Doge. I now knew where I was, and as in letting ourselves down we might get into a labyrinth of small courts, I seized an instrument with which the parchments are pierced to affix the seals. This tool I hid Balbi stick into the chink in the door, which I made with my bolt, and worked it about on all sides, not caring for the noise, till I had made a tolerable hole; but the prejecting splinters threatened to tear our skin and clothes, and it was five feet from the floor to the opening; for I had chosen the place where the planks were thinnest. I drew a chair to it, and the monk got on it; he stuck his arms and head through the opening, and I pushed the rest of him through into the chamber, the darkness of which did not alarm me. I knew where we were, and threw my bundle through to him, but left the rope behind. I had no one to aid me, on which account I placed a chair on the top of two others, and got through the aperture as far as my loins; when I desired Balbi to pull me through with all his force, regardless of the pain the laceration of flesh gave me. We hastened down two flights of steps, and arrived at the passage leading to the royal stairs as they are called; but these, wide as a town gate, were, as well as those beyond, shut with four wide doors; to force these would have required a petard.

"I sat down by Balbi, calm and collected, and told him that my work was done, and that heaven and fortune would achieve the rest for us. 'To-day,' I continued, 'is all Saints' Day, and to-morrow All Souls', and it is not likely anybody should come here; if any one should come to open the doors, I will rescue myself, and do you follow me; if none come, I will remain here and die of

hunger, for I can do no more.' Balbi's rage and desperation knew no bounds ; but I kept my temper, and began to dress myself completely. If Balbi looked like a peasant, his dress at least was not in shreds and bloody like mine. I drew off my stockings, and found on each foot large wounds, for which I was indebted to the gutter and lead plates ; I tore my handkerchief, and fastened the bandages with thread which I had about me. I put on my silk dress, which was ill-assorted with the weather, arranged my hair, and put on a shirt with lace ruffles, and silk stockings, and tossed my old clothes into a chair. I now had the appearance of a rake. I threw my handsome cloak on the monk's shoulders, and the fellow looked as if he had stolen it. I now approached a window, and, as I learned some two years afterwards in Paris, some loiterer below, who saw me, informed the keeper of the palace of it, who, fearing that he had locked some one in by mistake, came to release us. I heard the noise of steps coming up the stairs, and looking through a chink, saw only one man, with some keys in his hand. I commanded Balbi to observe the strictest silence, and hiding my stiletto under my clothes, placed myself close to the door, so that I needed only one step to reach the stairs. The door was opened, and the old man was so astonished at my appearance, that I was able silently and quickly to pass by him, the monk following me. Assuming then a sedate pace, I took the direction to the great staircase : Balbi wanted to go to the church to the right, for the sake of the sanctuary, forgetting that in Venice there was no sanctuary against state crimes and capital offences ; but at last he followed me.

"I did not expect security in Venice. I knew I could not be safe till I had passed the frontiers ; I stood now before the royal door of the ducal palace ; but without looking at any one, which was the best way to avoid being looked at, I crossed the Piazzetta, and reaching the canal, entered the first gondola I found there. I cast a look behind us, and saw no gondola in pursuit of us. I rejoiced in the fine day, which was as glorious as could be wished, shining with the first rays of an incomparable sunshine. Reflecting on the dangers of the past, on the place where I had spent the preceding day, and on all the fortunately-concurring events which had so favoured me, gratitude filled my soul, and I raised in silence my thanks for the mercy of God. Overcome by the variety of emotions, I burst into tears, which relieved my heart from the oppression of a joy that seemed ready to burst it."

Such is the record of one of the most remarkable escapes from prison ever attempted. But although out of prison, Casanova was not free from danger, and many days, spent in weary wanderings and hairbreadth escapes from recapture, elapsed ere he successfully gained the Venetian frontier, and with a joyful heart crossed the border-line and found himself in safety.

# ON TRIAL FOR MURDER

*By*

H. SPICER

A YOUNG undergraduate of Cambridge, Mr. D——, had been reading, during the long vacation, at the quiet little town of Exmouth—at which place, as many readers are aware, the river Exe is crossed by a ferry, communicating with the Starcross Station on the Great Western Railway. For this purpose a boat remains in constant attendance from dawn to dusk.

One night, between twelve and one o'clock, the young man suddenly awoke with the impression of having been addressed by an imperative voice saying, with such distinctness that the last word still rang upon his ear :

*"Go down to the ferry."*

Thinking it an ordinary dream, he composed himself again to sleep, when the second time the command was repeated, with this addition :

*"The boatman waits."*

There was something in this second voice which, it seemed to the young man's mind, impossible to disregard. He did, however, combat the inclination, and sat up in bed for some minutes, wide-awake, reasoning with himself on what he tried to consider the absurdity of rising in the dead of night, at the bidding of an imaginary voice, to go to a ferry where no boat would be found (the ferryman resided at Starcross), upon an errand of which he knew nothing. His efforts to dismiss the idea were, however, unsuccessful. He felt, at all events, that sleep was impossible. Then, at the worst, it was but a walk to the ferry and back, and none but himself need be aware of that little excursion. Finally, he sprang from the bed, dressed rapidly, not to leave time for more useless self-argument, and set off.

He had not reached the ferry when, to his astonishment, the boatman's harsh voice was heard through the darkness, hailing him impatiently: "Well, you've kept me waiting long enough to-night, I think. I've stopped nigh an hour for you."

The ferryman had, it appeared, received his summons also, but did not attribute it to any unusual source. Finding no passenger waiting on his own side of the river, he probably concluded he had been hailed by a passing boat, and directed to go over.

By the time Mr. D—— had arrived on the Starcross side, a further idea or impulse, which seemed to have its origin in the former, had gained possession of his mind. "Exeter!" "Exeter!" "Exeter!" was the word that kept continually reverberating, as it were, in his mental ear, like a summoning bell. His impression *now* was that at Exeter would be fulfilled the purpose, whatever it might prove to be, of this strange nocturnal expedition. To Exeter he accordingly proceeded by the first opportunity, and, it being only eight or ten miles, reached that good city about dawn.

Now, for the first time, he felt at a loss. All impulse or impression had departed. Wandering aimlessly about the streets, he blamed himself for the readiness with which he had yielded to what he now regarded as an idle fancy, and only comforted himself with the idea that at an early hour none of his acquaintances were likely to be abroad to question him as to his untimely visit. Mr. D—— resolved to return home by the next train; but, meanwhile, the shops and houses began to open, and passing an hotel the young gentleman thought he could scarcely do better than while away the hour that must necessarily intervene by ordering some breakfast.

The waiter was very slow in bringing the repast, but when at length he did, he apologised for the delay on the plea that the assizes, then proceeding, had filled the house to overflowing.

Mr. D—— had heard nothing of the assizes, and took little interest in the subject. Seeing, however, that the waiter regarded it as an event of considerable importance, he good-humouredly encouraged him to continue the theme, and was rewarded with a very amusing history of such cases as had been already disposed of, as well as with the waiter's own views concerning those yet remaining to be tried. Upon the whole, the man's volubility ended by inspiring young D—— with a portion of his own interest in the matter, and, accord-



ingly, instead of returning to Exmouth by the next train, he strolled about until the court opened, and then took his place among the spectators.

The case just commencing seemed to cause unusual excitement. The prisoner at the bar, who was in the dress of a carpenter, was arraigned on a capital charge. The chain of evidence against him, though circumstantial, was complete, and conviction seemed inevitable. There was, in fact, no opening for a defence, unless the prisoner were in a position to prove the witnesses, one and all, mistaken in their identity, and establish an *alibi*.

When asked what he had to say, he quietly replied: "It is impossible that I could have committed this crime, because on the day and at the hour it took place, I was sent to mend the sash-line of a window at Mr. G.'s house at M——. There is one gentleman," he added, after a pause, "who could prove that I was there, but I don't know who he is, nor where to have looked for him. Yes, I *know* he could prove my innocence, for a particular reason that would remind him of me; but there, I can't help it, the Lord's will be done," and the poor fellow, with a sigh, appeared to resign himself to his fate.

All the time Mr. D—— had been listening with profound attention to the progress of the trial, and when the prisoner concluded his sad and hopeless address, he stared and looked earnestly at him. As his eyes dwelt upon the gloomy, toil-worn face—one by one, link by link—a chain of circumstances, trivial enough at the time, but now important as bearing upon the liberty, if not the very life, of a fellow-creature, came back to his remembrance. He had gone, some months before, to pay an early visit to M——. The latter was from home, but, wishing particularly to see him, D—— had decided to await his return, and, for that purpose, had gone up to his friend's library, meaning to beguile the interval with a book. Here, however, he found a carpenter making some repairs about the window, and, in place of reading, he stood for some minutes watching the man, and conversing with him about his work. While doing so, something was said that he was desirous of noting down, and he took out his memorandum book for that purpose, but found that he had lost his pencil, when the carpenter, observing his difficulty, handed him his own (a short, brown, stumpy article, with square sides), saying that "if he might make so bold, Mr. D—— was welcome to it."

All this came back to the young man's mind as clearly as if it had occurred the day before. Hastily turning to his pocket-book, he there found the very entry he had made, date included, written in the thick but faint lines produced by the carpenter's pencil. He instantly made known to the court his wish to be examined on the man's behalf and, being sworn, deposed to the above facts, clearly identifying the prisoner, as well as the pencil, which the man produced from his pocket. The jury was satisfied, and returned a verdict of acquittal.

# A SOUTH AMERICAN REBELLION

By

CAPTAIN JAMES H. FREEBODY

*Captain Freebody was an engineer constructing bridges in Venezuela shortly after the war, when the country was disturbed by the usual accounts of revolution. He went calmly on with his work until one day a fellow constructor, Captain Dutchley, disappeared, and his peons—native workers—said he had been captured by rebels. Three weeks later, he reappeared, and this is the story he told to Captain Freebody.*

MY task was nearly finished. I stood surveying with pride the work of many months—a fine new steel bridge carrying a road across the railway; not, maybe, what you would call a bridge. It was towards evening, and the peons were laying down tools. Then we pricked up our ears. A crashing could be heard in the undergrowth. A sweating peon burst from the forest on the other side of the track. He was gabbling, terror-stricken, and incoherent. I tried to catch what he was saying; his patois was beyond me. But my peons understood. They left their tools, and scuttled. In a minute I was alone.

The press-gang! I thought, and I packed up my few belongings and mounted my petrol scooter.

Then, suddenly, from the forest came a dozen men. They came out stealthily, as if on the look-out for an attack. They saw me. One of them, evidently leader of the patrol, pulled out a revolver. Levelling it at me, he covered me while the party advanced. They were all rough-looking fellows with big sombreros, their black hair escaping from under their hats; the leader, however, wore a blue uniform, much tattered and very dirty; he looked a man of some distinction, and, when he addressed an odd remark to the patrol, he spoke good Castilian.

The party stood immobile, I in the midst. The leader stationed himself at my side, still fingering his revolver. The others remained as if on guard, rifles at their sides.

A rustle in the undergrowth brought the patrol to a state of military tension. From the forest came a tall man dressed in rough khaki trousers and a khaki uniform, with a big sombrero. He wore two bandoliers, and carried a pair of holsters. He was swarthy, hook-nosed, and had a jutting chin. A Spanish Jew obviously. Three other men accompanied him; one was a small wizened man with pinched cheeks. He might have been any age from twenty to fifty. A large, red-faced, stout fellow was sweating, his chin seeming to be about to burst his chin-strap. The fourth of the group was lean and dyspeptic-looking, very brown and haggard, with the remnants of greying side-whiskers, and an atrocious squint.

As this party of four crossed the bridge, men poured out from the forest and gathered in a mob, behind the staff, for so I judged them. There must have been three hundred of the soldiers, all rough fellows, in ordinary costume, with bandoliers and guns.

The Spanish Jew was obviously the captain of this band. He walked across to the patrol. He spoke the Castilian—a tongue I could manage fairly easily. He spoke to the leader of the patrol.

“Who’s this?”

“Don’t know, sir; I think he’s an overseer from the oil camp.”

The leader turned on me.

“What’s your business?”

“I am employed at the oil-field yonder.”

“What are you doing here?”

I pointed to the heaps of rubble, piled at either end of the bridge.

“I have been superintending the building of the bridge.”

“Where are your workmen?”

“A man brought news of your coming. The workmen cleared out. I should have done the same, but I couldn’t understand what he said.”

The leader considered. Then he said:

“You know who I am?”

“No.”

“I am Captain Santos.”

“Oh?” I said, trying to look as if the name were familiar to me.

“I am leading a detachment of the rebels.”

That was news indeed !

Again the leader considered. He turned to his staff. They talked together. Then he turned again to me :

" You must come along with us."

" Why ? " I asked.

" We shall take you as a hostage."

I nodded. More likely a question of ransom, I thought.

Captain Santos gave a command. The soldiers formed. I was searched ; I had no arms. Four soldiers escorted me. We marched on.

Night fell when we were in the paths of the forest. We came to a clearing. Four fires were lighted. The men gathered in groups around the fire. The staff sat apart at a special private fire. My escort joined a band of soldiers. All sprawled around a fire. My wrist was tied to the wrist of one of the escort, and I, too, lay down.

The night came down dark and heavy like a cloak. There was no moon. The soldiers slept where they lay, wrapped in a single blanket from scanty packs. I lay and shivered, curled up near the fire, roasted in part, frozen in part.

I didn't remember the dawn. I was jerked to my feet, and on we went. By midday I heard grumbles around me. The men were hungry ; nobody had eaten that day, nor the evening before.

We passed out of the forest. The sun was blinding. An apparently impassable crag lay before us. The leader surveyed it for a moment, standing like a statue. He was a very self-conscious revolutionist, with his effective poses. But posing is a useful part of a revolutionist's stock-in-trade.

He saw, it seemed, a path. We wound down a slope, the surface of which was covered with loose rocks. We slipped and slithered into a defile. Before us was a rough path. The path bore steeply upwards for a couple of hundred feet, then apparently lost itself.

We started up the path. We clung, on the way, to scrub and bushes. The four soldiers escorting me stopped to squabble. There were impatient cries from the men behind. A piece of rope was produced. My wrist was tied to the wrist of one man, a fair length of rope separating us.

My captor was a clumsy climber. He slid, and lost his balance, righted himself with a jerk, and again overbalanced. Each time my wrist was almost wrenched off.

The four leaders were above us. Apparently the path came to an end. Captain Santos again posed while the whole

"army" waited in uncomfortable positions on the path. Then he reached up to a ledge, dug his fingers in somehow, heaved himself up, and shouted that he had discovered the continuation of the path.

The little wizened man had to be given an undignified heave in the rear to reach the ledge. He grunted himself up, then gave a hand to the remaining two members of the staff.

Then the rest of the rebels followed. There was much cursing. My captor and I hindered each other, and gave each other considerable pain. Beside me was a soldier with almost incredibly stumpy legs. Two kindly rebels took a leg each, and hoisted him on to the ledge. He hung panting and swearing. Then one of his supporters playfully tickled him in a susceptible place. He kicked out. The two lost their balance. They toppled down the slope. I thought to see the remainder of the column go hurtling down. The two in falling, struck the legs of the first soldier behind them. He kicked them off in self-defence. They rolled and bumped to the bottom. I thought they must have broken their necks; but after a moment they stood up. The little soldier, having scrambled upright on the ledge, waved to them playfully. They shook their fists and started on the climb again.

At last the whole force was again on the path toiling upwards. The path, and the cliff-face, came to an end. We found ourselves on top, facing a rolling, bright green savannah.

And, down in the dip of the waving grass, was the smoke of a village.

The soldiers raised a faint rasping cheer, and the force cantered rather than marched, down to the village.

It was evident that the village had taken the alarm. Even at a distance, we could see the vague stirring of uneasiness. Apparently the rebels had kept their movements very secret, for the village was not fortified. Dogs barked, men appeared at cottage-doors, and disappeared again rapidly.

Our force brought up fifty yards from the village. Captain Santos cupped his hands. He bawled across to the village. There was silence. Nobody could be seen. He shouted again. Still there was silence. The whole force stood still.

Then came one unbelievable—crack! A man a yard from me drew himself up and fell on his face. A stupefied silence weighed on everything, as the sound of the shot died away. In the blazing sun the men stood momentarily statue-like.

Then a sudden roar like an animal in pain made my heart cold. Santos was prancing about in the most insensate passion

I have ever seen. His cultured Spanish phrases were lost in a guttural stream of the vilest patois.

The whole troop, like men pushed suddenly from behind, tore down at the village. The man to whom I was tethered forgot me. He nearly pulled me on to my face. I broke into a run with the rest.

From the window of the cottage came puffs of smoke. My captor, when we were ten yards from the village, gasped and fell. Tethered to his wrist, I went down, too. My nose spurted blood.

A soldier, running behind me, almost fell over me. He recovered, drew back, and presented his rifle at me ; I thought at first that he was going to shoot me, and thus rid the troop of the necessity of carrying me around. But I then realised that he was guarding me. I sat on the ground, still tethered to my shot captor. He was gulping and gasping for breath. I made a move to tend him. My guard moved his rifle threateningly. I sat still.

Three more rebels lay on the ground in the middle of the cluster of cottages. The rest had scattered into the various cottages. In a moment, out came bedding, tables, chairs, hang-ups, ornaments, tossed outside the doors, piled in the dust. One rebel took a child, not more than six months old, and flung it from the door on to the pile of household possessions. The mother, shrieking, ran out to the baby, found it unhurt—for it had fallen on some soft stuffs—and ran into the house with it. At the door she met the rebel coming out. She raised a big fist, and punched his cheek with such force that blood spurted from between his lips. He twisted his face into the most horrible animal expression. Then he seized the mother.

I started up at the horror of that, and nearly got myself shot. But rape became a common thing in that raid. An old man raised a quavering protest. He lifted an aged arm and tried vainly to strike a rebel. The rebel felled him with a blow and shot him where he lay. Little children were kicked and flung from the wrecked rooms.

Then, at last, the Captain and his lieutenants gathered in the middle of the village. The piles of possessions gathered before the houses were swept into one big pile. In a moment they were crackling, and black smoke was rising. Several bodies of men, several fainting women, children lying, hugging the earth and sobbing with terror, were witnesses to the vengeance of Santos.

Then came the grand climax. A man, obviously by his dress and bearing the leading man of the village, was led out. He was stood against the wall. A volley rattled out, and died away across the savannah! Another body, lying like a monstrous human ninepin, was Captain Santos's final solemn warning to all resisters of victorious rebels.

Then the whole party gathered up stores—chickens in particular, besides all the bread and provisions looted from the houses; and, driving an ox before us, we moved on a couple of miles, leaving a mourning village, from the middle of which rose a spiral of black smoke.

Then, as the afternoon grew to evening, we bivouacked, fires lighted, oxen roasted, chickens turning on spits. The rebels feasted and talked hilariously.

All this while I was bound to the wrist of a timid boy—how he had ever considered himself as a bold rebel, I don't know. He sat, quiet, looking at me sideways. Then he said, suddenly:

"*Americano?*"

"*Ingles,*" I answered.

He pondered that reply. Then he began to whistle to another soldier. A great deal of whispering went on, and many glances were directed towards me.

Half an hour passed. Then the little wizened fellow came, treading among the reclining men. He stopped before me. He opened his mouth twice like a fish before he spoke. When he did speak the probabilities of this mortal life got a mighty shock.

He said:

"Well, 'ow's things, mate?"

This from a picturesque mediaeval rebel in a land of forest and savannah!

I could think of nothing to say. I tried vaguely to pierce through the maze of bewilderment that enveloped me.

I said foolishly: "Where did you learn English?"

"Learn it? Blimey, at me mother's knee, same's you did."

Listening to his voice, I knew that the miracle was no dream. From no city in the world would you get such a humorous, moaning whine as the voice of this London cockney.

"But . . . but how the devil do you come to be mixed up in a revolution?"

He looked round a bit scared, although it is certain that nobody in that band could have understood him.



"Blow me if I know, properly."

He sat down, looking cunningly confidential.

"I started as a grocer in Balham—know it? Well, things wasn't looking up, so I sold the business, and got a job in one o' them big grocers, servin' be'ind a counter. Well, there was a bloke behind the counter nex' ter me—cheese and bacon department. Reg'lar ambitious—always readin'. 'E read all about the oil boom. 'E took 'is money out o' the bank, and came across ter Venez-u-ela.

"Couple a years ago 'e wrote ter me. Says there's a fine openin' fer storekeepers—chaps with plenty o' money ter spend.

"Well, I'd saved a bit, so I come over. I started up a canteen on the — oil-field—know it?

"Then one day a bloke comes in ter my canteen. 'E starts tellin' me about all the money ter be made in Venez-u-ela, if yer can only keep yer conscience in yer pocket fer a bit. 'Smugglin', 'e says, 'smugglin's the quickest way o' makin' money.

"So, ter cut a long story short, I joined in with a lot o' dagoes; smugglin' anythink, we was, from cabbages ter stockin's, landing on a dark part of the shore with small boats. The gang 'ad its headquarters on the island—Curaçao—and a coaster used ter fetch the stuff across, so's we could land it in boats.

"Well, one day I took a trip ter the island to 'ave a look round. There I meets the stout bloke—the Dutchman—you seen 'im? He takes a fancy ter me; 'e was in the business like me. We got on all right tergether, with bits o' Spanish, Dutch, and English, makin' signs for anythink we couldn't explain in them languages.

"'E's a good chap, but 'e 'ad a bee in his bonnet. 'E'd met old what's 'is name—bloke 'oo started the dust-up—and Santos 'is right-'and man.

"One night 'e fetched me along to a meetin' in a wood outside the town. I couldn't understand what all the dust-up was about. Everybody made speeches. Then they cheered. Somebody pushed a bandolier round me, and told me I was a rebel.

"Course, I didn't want ter do no rebellin', but I couldn't think o' the Spanish, at the moment, fer crying off . . . so 'ere I am."

He stared, his eyes in a pucker of wrinkles. He was a very mild-looking rebel.

"Who's the Jew fellow?" I asked.

"Jew? 'Oo?"

"Santos."

"Blow me, 'e ain't no Jew. Looks as if 'is mother was, but 'e says 'e's pure Castilian. These fellers wouldn't foller a Jew."

"Who's the tall man with the squint?"

"'Im?" he replied, "'e was a professor in some university in Spain, cracked ideas about revolutions and what-not."

He stared moodily at the ground.

"My name's Rogers," he said suddenly, and got up.

"Wish ter God I was back in Balham," he said, and wandered dismally away.

That night we again bivouacked in a forest clearing. As before, I was bound by the wrist to a soldier. Sitting before a fire, trying to keep warm, I pondered. This was obviously only a portion of the revolutionary force. Why had the rebels split up? There could be only one reason: the leader wanted to make it difficult for the Government, in this country of forest, mountains, and rolling savannah, to follow the movements and guess at the intentions of the rebels. Evidently there was some meeting-place, already arranged, where the rebels would suddenly become an army. Detachments of military were, I knew, scouring the country, but lack of communications made their task difficult, and, as yet, we had seen no sign of the Government forces. Nor had the rebels encountered any organised opposition from the moment of their rapid and silent descent on the coast—at any rate, this detachment had not.

Another weary night passed, and I shivered until the never-coming dawn. The band breakfasted and went on. Breaking through a tract of forest about midday, we were met by an excited peon, who burst, dirty and dishevelled, from the dark forest. He chattered almost hysterically to Santos, who nodded his head with his usual grave dignity.

I was puzzled by this new development. The leaders conferred while the rebel soldiers stood patiently at ease. Then the peon ran off, and the band veered suddenly on to a tiny forest track, bearing west. On this track we had to force our way through the dense, nearly solid, undergrowth.

Well after midday we halted. We took a meal squatting, standing, or lying on the bush track, for there were no clearings.

Rogers, that most ineffectual rebel, gravitated in my direction; he had taken to confiding in me lately. I asked him

what was wrong, and why we had abandoned the path. He leaned dolefully against a tree.

"Military about. That feller says they're determined ter git Santos. There's a price on 'is 'ead—so 'e says. So we've got ter skirt a mountain—or something cheerful.

"Blow me! Wish I was outer this. No bloomin' mountains in Balham."

He spat miserably and went off.

A price on Santos's head! I had heard so much about these rebellions. Once a prize was offered, somebody's greed would wreck the enterprise.

And, sure enough, by sundown the Dutchman was missing.

The night that followed was a horror. Nobody had the slightest doubt as to the motive of the Dutchman's disappearance. In the pitch darkness, the band halted. There was no clearing. We dared not lie down in the bush, for fear of snakes. The men, therefore, lay sprawled along the tiny track. A couple of torches cast weird shadows among the trees. Four men kept watch, all the band taking turns.

It was a night of apprehension and misery. At every stirring in the bush, men groaned, and turned in a restless sleep. The darting shadows of the torches seemed at times to be concealing the hiding form of a soldier.

Then Santos ordered the torches to be extinguished and the surrounding forest was plunged into blackness. The sentries lay in the palpitating darkness, listening for the tread of feet. The men lay chilled on the ground.

Dawn came without an attack. The weary force struggled on through the dense forest. The path opened out, became wider. A clearing lay ahead. It was a relief after the eternal green gloom.

Crack! Crack!

A sudden stutter of rifles echoed through the trees. Our force scattered, and crouched behind trees and bushes. Four men lay on the dusty path.

The rebels opened fire in return. We could see nothing among the trees but rapidly moving shadows; the rebels fired in their direction, and from the other side of the clearing came a return fusillade. Bullets shattered among the trees.

The Government forces, whatever their number, were obviously led by an inefficient general. The firing had opened just as the rebels entered the clearing. Had the attack been withheld for ten minutes, we should have been surrounded and completely at the mercy of the attackers.

Now the exchange of shots went on almost vainly, making a shattering hail of sound, but having little effect.

The soldier to whose wrist mine was tied, peered impatiently from behind his tree, being unable to use a gun. I lay on the ground almost under him, determined not to risk my life unnecessarily.

He suddenly gurgled, I saw his knees bend above me. Then he fell across my shoulders. I heaved him off quickly ; he was already dead. With an edge of stone I severed the strap. I was free, but could not move save at great risk.

Then the firing died away into silence. The moving shadows among the trees retreated. The rebels fired another volley. There was no reply. For half an hour the band was crouched, cramped, behind the trees. Then Santos moved. As he moved, he saw me. Once again I was tied. My chance of freedom had come at the wrong time and place.

Gradually the band gathered again where the path opened into a clearing. There was silence. Obviously we had to move. We could not go back, so we had to risk an advance.

At an order, the rebels divided into two files, and circled around the edge of the clearing. The two files met at the far side where the path continued. Again the path narrowed, and we plunged into the forest.

All that afternoon we trudged. I suppose that Santos had a plan. His head was high, and he was still conscious of his own poise. It was getting late, the gloom was concentrating itself around us, when the forest showed a dulled green opening.

Caution was again needful. In two files the rebels crept along the path, keeping close to the trees on either edge. The tunnel-end widened. The space of grass and stunted bushes beyond showed itself. Fully to the mouth of that tunnel we came. Still there was silence.

In the midst of the clearing stood, strangely, one tree. Under the tree was one man, standing under it in an unnatural, transfixed attitude. Carefully, finding it difficult not to look at this surprising apparition, the men filed around the clearing as before. Then walking backwards with rifles levelled towards the forest, they surrounded the tree.

The man under the tree stood in his shirt only. His stiff, unnatural pose was explained by the fine rope twirled about his neck, and hitched to a branch in such a way that the man had to hold himself rigidly upright in order not to be strangled. His arms were bound.

Most astonishing—the man was the Dutchman who had deserted the rebels !

I understood then the surprising withdrawal of the military. Their commander—possibly it was only a roving band of local militia—knew at least one man who could make better use of the price on Santos's head. So he had left the informer, who had earned the money by his treachery, where he might be found by his vengeful fellows. Then there would still be time to trap the rebels on this fatal path which had no side-turnings.

I never before saw human beings so suddenly converted into animals as on that occasion. The rebels screamed with a kind of primeval blood-lust. They rushed at the Dutchman. One fiend clawed his face as he stood bound, another whipped out a knife to mutilate the renegade. A swift, violent squabble followed. Evidently some men wanted to hang the Dutchman, others wished to reserve for him a more gory and spectacular death.

Into the seething mob strode Santos. He had power, that man. He threw back his head and folded his arms—the musical-comedy bandit. He made a quick speech, beginning without waiting for silence. It was a short, yet dignified speech. The animal sounds and the quarrelling died away. The speech became a model of lordly eloquence, after the classical model of a Roman general's oration to his soldiers.

The bluff succeeded. The angry passions subsided ; the men formed into line ; the Dutchman was cut down ; and on trudged the rebels, as darkness fell.

For another three hours we wound along the forest path. Then we came upon another clearing. There we bivouacked, lighting four fires, one at each end of the clearing. Apparently the rebels, in the fury they all felt at the Dutchman's treachery, had forgotten the possibilities of attack. For there was no doubt that the fury of revenge still burned in them ; the passionate glances of three hundred pairs of eyes, turned on the Dutchman, held small hope of mercy should the men get their hands on him.

The traitor sat, hands still bound, the wisp of cord still around his neck, crouched before a fire. A rebel sat beside him, gun levelled. The Dutchman's head was bent ; he could feel, without seeing, the resentment of those eyes.

I fell to wondering what the rebels were going to do with him. I looked at Santos. He sat, picturesquely brooding, apparently lost in thought.

Then suddenly, in the flickering firelight, he stood up. He cast orders around. A number of men fashioned from boughs a rough seat for him. Then the whole force sat in a ring—all save four sentries who squatted, one at each of the fires outside the ring, peering outwards into the bush with rifles poised.

Santos seated himself carefully on the throne of boughs. The murmuring band drew a little inward. The ashy traitor was tossed into the circle. The four crackling fires lighted up the face of the leader, the scared features of the Dutchman, and shone from the hate-filled eyes of the ring of watchers.

A trial ! And a trial conducted with a dignity and spaciousness, even in that clearing, in a wild forest of a wild country ; even though it was the trial of a renegade among rebels ; even though the verdict showed in the eyes of the watchers before the trial had begun. Yet Santos was an actor even in this.

He began in measured and grave tones ; his assumption of a judicial voice might have been comical but for the depth of hatred lying beneath its calm.

"Prisoner Hendricks, you are charged with desertion and treachery."

He spoke pure Castilian.

Hendricks burst into a spluttering explanation in broken Spanish.

"You will be silent, prisoner. Answer my questions. Why did you desert, save for the purpose of betraying your comrades ?"

"I . . . I . . . ." Hendricks obviously could not invent a plausible explanation.

"Prisoner, you stand convicted by your hesitation. You have deserted ; you have betrayed your friends ; you have caused the death of four of our men."

"There is only one punishment for a man who is a deserter, a traitor, and a murderer."

The Dutchman began a horrible shaking which seemed to toss his body from side to side. An idiotic babbling burst from his lips. Santos stood up. He made a sign. A rope was twisted around the traitor's neck. It was slung over a branch. The men around, the blood-lust shining from their eyes, began to growl like animals.

Santos spoke again. The growling ceased. The men stood, like statues, in the act of springing. Only the leader's voice stopped them from hurling themselves at Hendricks.

Santos took one step towards the helpless man strung to the branch. He stood, thrusting out his jaw, and stared full at the Dutchman. Hendricks' white face blanched the more. Then Santos did a horrible thing—horrible because of its unexpected contrast with his previous behaviour—horrible because of the lead it gave to his savage followers.

He stared for a full minute at Hendricks, slowly leered horribly, and slapped the Dutchman's face. Then he drew back a little, bent forward, and spat full into the face of the helpless man.

After that he turned slowly and walked with dignity right out of the clearing and along the forest path. His back disappeared from the last reach of the fires' light.

Every man watched him go. All heads were turned, every man following with fascinated eyes the straight form of Santos. Then, like a well-drilled chorus, their eyes slowly turned back to Hendricks.

Like a pistol-shot the silence was broken by a savage whoop. Half a dozen men stepped forward, and with slow, ceremonious, leering deliberation, imitated Santos's last insult.

Then a little man with a bearded face and a low-hanging brow, standing near me, suddenly leapt like a greyhound. He lifted a knife above his head. He slashed. The poor devil's face hung in tatters.

That beastly assault was a signal for the breaking down of the dam which stemmed the tide of human fury and vengeance. The men pounced like vultures on carrion, at that poor creature with half a face. They spat, they slashed with knives, at the bleeding mess which had been a human face.

Yet the body, held up by the rope, still was full of life. So those dastards set about the quivering trunk with their beastly savagery.

Mutilated, with portions cut from him, the nightmare remains of that poor devil were hoisted at last. I found myself sobbing with helpless horror as that bleeding bundle of sodden clothes dangled at the end of a rope. A final shout of exultation greeted this final enormity.

There succeeded a kind of empty shame. Such scenes as I have described have been witnessed by travellers in other parts of the world, although I think never in such circumstances. Yet I never remember reading, after such descriptions, of the reaction that followed.

A sudden silence fell. Men stood, looked at each other, and turned away. If there had been wine, they would, I sup-

pose, have drowned their rising sense of shame in the fumes of it. But they avoided each other's eyes, sat moodily around and tried to look in any direction other than the twisting horror at the end of the rope.

Half an hour later, Santos returned. He did not appear even to notice the hanging body. He strode to his blanket, wrapped himself up, and went to sleep. The rest of the men did the same, slowly, almost reluctantly—feeling, it seemed, the emptiness of their revenge after its accomplishment.

And all that night some men tossed and groaned and cried out. . . .

The next morning the band was on the move at dawn.

\* \* \* \* \*

Why had we not been attacked ?

I found myself asking this question as we plodded along the interminable forest path. Somewhere in the forest, awaiting ambushed around a clearing, must be the general who wanted the reward for Santos's head, with as numerous a command as he could gather. At any moment I expected a volley.

But Santos had, apparently, forgotten all about the possibilities of an attack. He strode on serenely.

Then the attack came. Not in a clearing. The forest path had widened. It was just after midday. The trees were becoming spaced ; the dense mass of the forest's heart was giving way to the more scattered fringe. Heavily we were filing through it

Sudden and swift, distant dark shadows loomed among the trees. At the first volley, a dozen men fell. Down on their bellies flopped the rebels. One by one they crowded to cover. As usual I was helpless and was pulled on to my face, unable to defend myself, forced to get what cover I could beside my guard.

From the beginning the rebels had lost the fight. Man after man groaned and lay still, or fell, tottering, against a tree. The forest rang with shots, and spurts of bark spat from the trees.

My guard and I were just behind Santos. My cockney friend was leaning heavily against a nearby tree, obviously wounded. The professor who handled a pen better than a gun, was a yard from me.

There was a sudden stir which could be felt even amidst the heat of the fight. Santos had broken into a run and was dodging and leaping among the trees. In a moment the rest of the rebel force had scattered. Santos ran across the path, escaping the hail of bullets by a miracle. My guard suddenly



bounced after him, and jerked me with him. Together we crossed the path. The hail of bullets had ceased that instant. The firing had lost its direction. Hand-to-hand fights re-echoed in the wood. From a short distance it was impossible to know friend from foe, so scattered and intermixed were troops and rebels.

There were about twenty men who had followed the lead of Santos. We bounded and dodged. The sound of fighting and firing grew remoter. The trees were spaced wider as we ran. Suddenly we burst from the forest, well-nigh blinded by the glaring sun.

Before us was a half-mile of grassy plain. It rose steeply, and broke off at an edge cutting the sky. We laboured up the slope panting. We found ourselves at a cliff-edge. Below us was a valley, and, in it, striding across a stream, was a little town with smoking cottages and chimneys.

Down the steep face we stumbled, clinging desperately at any crevice or bush. A couple of hundred feet and we were on the green slope which shot us, running breathlessly, down to the stream side.

Somebody looked round and shouted. Men were gesticulating at the cliff-edge. They were soldiers. They were manœuvring cautiously for foothold; they had not our desperation to help.

We ran along the valleys. A little stone bridge spanned the stream. Some cottages were on our side of the stream, but the main part of the town was on the other side. It climbed the hillside. A church with a tall campanile dominated the little town from the hillside. Mules almost filled the little market-place. Half the folk in the town, attracted from their business by the shooting, were gathered in the dusty ways which joined at the bridge. Dogs barked, women stood at doorways with children, labourers paused with scythes, shopkeepers stood staring in the middle of the road. It was the strangest contrast to the almost incredible scenes in the wood.

Through the crowd, gathered at the far end of the bridge, we pushed our way. They gaped and scattered. Bedraggled, dusty, bleeding, wild of eye, we banged respectable townsfolk from their stations, and followed Santos up the dusty street. I could feel as we went, the thousand eyes which followed us, could feel the electricity of amazement which quivered in the air.

Down the cliffside came more and more soldiers, sliding, slipping, cautiously feeling and moving like black blobs, kicking up tiny clouds of dust.

Up the street, meanwhile, we followed Santos. And not one policeman did we meet or catch sight of.

Our leader pulled up before a long low house, evidently belonging to a family of some wealth. It was built at the highest part of the town. Two wrought-iron gates led to a drive. The gates were locked. A black woman with an apron was peering out of a little window.

Santos quickly tried the gate. Then he clambered up it, and was over in a moment. We all followed, when he had opened the gate. The last man relocked it. All the time I was wondering why the rebels did not cut me loose or shoot me. But perhaps I had become a habit.

Up the drive we shot. Looking around, I saw the staring crowd, faces turned up the hill after us, broken open from behind. The military were coming through.

Up to the house ran the band of twenty men. The huge oak door was barred. We charged around to the side. The black woman had gone. A loud sobbing and wailing from within the house suggested her presence. The servants' door was frailer. The rebels lined up, turned shoulder to shoulder, and, like a battering-ram, thrust their bodies towards the door. Three such lunges, and it was off its hinges, with three men piled on it.

Into the house charged the band. The men ran from room to room. There was only one floor, but the house rambled over a wide area, and there were many rooms, all simply but expensively furnished. The black cook was found and pitched out. A black butler was treated in the same way. In one room was found a white-haired, dignified, old Spanish lady, seated in an invalid's chair. She was forced from it, dragged tottering across the room, and then pitched out of the door. The poor old creature wept like a baby, helplessly, crawling about on the grass fringe outside.

Then the side door was blocked up with the heavier furniture in the house, and rebels were concealed at each window with rifles loaded, and the little band of men lay ready for a siege as the military came up to the gates of the house.

There was silence then. The military, at the gates, paused. We heard somebody shout an order. One soldier climbed the gate. Poised on top, he was an easy mark. A rebel fired, soldier fell.

There was silence again. The besieged, excited by the military's silence, cheered. Again silence.

The silence lasted for twenty minutes. A quiet movement

and scuffling outside the high wall which surrounded the house, puzzled the rebels. Then slowly and shyly rifles showed their questing noses over the wall. A continuous line of heads bobbed up like sudden wall ornaments. A quick volley, and the heads ducked again. A vain volley indeed.

A wild wail arose. The old woman, whom every one had forgotten, had been lying on the grass. At the roaring spatter of shots, she got up, tried to run, and fell over, clawing helplessly at the ground. Then from another part of the garden arose a wild screech, and, from a clump of bushes, the black cook and the black butler ran yelling towards the gate. Quickly they unlocked it and fled down the street, between houses of townsfolk, hardly daring to peep.

The old lady on the lawn stirred, got up, and again tried to run. She fell moaning and sobbing in terror.

Then slowly the gate opened. A soldier walked boldly in. The rebels in the house stared as the solitary man strode calmly up the drive. He crossed the lawn. It was then clear that he had come to rescue the helpless old lady.

The rebels stared in astonishment. Then one man near me, guarding a window, sighted and fired. The man outside, bending to help the old woman, started at the shot. It missed him. Santos gave a snarl of rage.

"Filthy dog!" he said, strode across to the man who had fired, and hit him savagely with the butt of his revolver. The man dropped with a broken head.

Meanwhile the soldier had picked up the old lady in his arms and, unmolested, carried her to the gates, and through them to safety.

Not another shot was fired that day. Night fell; we took food, for the house was plentifully stocked. In the back kitchen was a pump to a well. We should not die of thirst, but, if we were besieged long, we should be driven out by hunger. But Santos was cheerful and hopeful. The revolution, he said, would succeed. The main body of the rebels had by now met the other auxiliary bands. Soon they would be marching on Caracas and Maracaibo.

But even then, had he known it, the revolution was petering out; not from defeat, but through wholesale desertion. The ringleaders were mostly, like some of their followers, political exiles, and the mere getting back to Venezuela was the height of their ambition. If, then, they could get back to their patios and coffee without bloodshed, they would do it.

The next day the same ghostly silence persisted. Carts



*"Filthy dog!" to the man who had fired, and hit him savagely.*



rumbled in the streets. Apparently the townsfolk went about their usual business. And, above their town, overlooking their bustling little market-place, a house, full of rebels, looked down on them.

The next day again, all was silence. Food was short. Tempers were shorter. This inactivity was killing. But the next day things began to happen.

An hour after dawn the gates opened. A soldier came forward. He held a white flag. He advanced to within twenty yards of the house. He shouted for Santos. The leader stood at the window. I was behind him. I could see below the stern and calm messenger. The soldier in the garden shouted :

"We call on you to surrender !"

"I refuse to surrender," answered Santos.

There was a murmur behind him from the men—what the murmur signified in the way of opinion I could not tell.

The messenger went on.

"If you surrender, you will all be given twenty-four hours to leave the country. Otherwise, if you refuse to surrender, we shall bomb the house. You have one hour to decide."

"Go to hell !" shouted Santos, his dignity vanishing as the difficulty of the situation forced itself upon him.

Every man in the house had heard the terms. There began a murmur of men discontented. The murmur swelled ; remarks, too loud to ignore, were directed at Santos.

The men from the other rooms left their posts, and drifted into the room.

Soon all the men—there were eighteen—were gathered, looking rather truculent, about the room.

Santos felt the resentful atmosphere. He was always direct. He stepped suddenly into the middle of the room, folded his arms, and said :

"We do not surrender !"

He looked defiantly from side to side. Perhaps, besides his undaunted courage, he had other motives. His followers might escape with exile. It was almost certain that no petty general with an itching palm would let him go, faith or no faith.

The troubled murmuring grew. One man voiced the feelings of the rest.

"All very well for you, Captain. We want to get out of here. We shall be lucky to get away with unbroken heads and unstretched necks."

There was a muttered general agreement.

Santos snorted his emphatic opinion. He tried a new tack.

"All bluff. Where can they get bombs from? It's a trick."

The same speaker as before countered.

"What if it is? We shall starve if we stay here."

"We shall not stay here," said Santos, dignity bristling.

"The revolution will be successful without us. You will all get the good things of the new administration."

There was a growl at this. Santos's confidence evidently was not shared.

The argument wore on till the hour was up. By that time there were ugly intentions written in the faces of the men who surrounded Santos.

From outside came the soldier's hail:

"Hallo, there! Captain Santos!"

Santos again went to the window.

"Will you surrender?"

"No!"

There was a threatening movement in the room. Santos turned and faced his followers.

"Damn fools!" he said "You'll see that it's bluff, as I warned you."

An appalling crash gave the lie to this remark. A blinding cloud of dust swept into the room. The front door and the verandah had disappeared, and a scattered mess of broken stone, with drifting dust, was all that was left.

The dust and smoke drifted away. There was a silence as appalling as the explosion's noise. A loud voice insisted from outside the gate:

"The next one will be a better shot. Will you surrender?"

Santos turned to run to the window. The men, shaking with terror of the last earth-shaking roar, headed him off. Face livid, Santos swung his fist. One fellow went down like a tree falling, another was doubled up by a kick in the stomach. Santos, like a madman, tore himself from grasping hands. He swayed drunkenly in the window opening. He bawled, his voice breaking with a treble scream, the word "No!" He repeated it a dozen times, each time hoarser and more frantic.

The mob of men surged at him. They drowned his frenzied "No!" with a roar of "Yes!"

A moment later, Santos was lying on his back with a dozen daggers stuck in him.

The rebels had surrendered.

When the soldiers made their way into the house, I was

herded with the rest of the rebels. We were all paraded in the garden. The gates were opened. The whole population of the town crowded at the gate-opening, peering curiously at the rebels. A bedraggled lot of scarecrows we were.

The body of Santos was borne from the house. Then a dark-bearded, saturnine general interrogated selected rebels. He came up to me. He said gutturally :

"Where did you join this precious gang ? "

"I didn't join. I was captured."

The general bellowed with hoarse laughter. His officers made would-be witty remarks about my size, figure, and face.

I protested that I had been forced into this escapade. I fished from an inner pocket some very dirty papers and thrust them at the general. He took them, turned them from side to side. I wondered if he could read, for he tossed them to a subordinate. That officer peered at them, then said :

"These papers prove that he is a British subject, sir, unless he stole the papers."

"Probably stole them," said the general, determined not to be baulked. "And, anyway, even if they are his papers, being a British subject doesn't prevent him from joining the rebels. There were five Englishmen in the last revolution we had a hand in."

He gave the order to march us off. At that moment one of the rebels, a surly enough fellow usually, took a step forward, spoke the general's name, and jerked his thumb in my direction.

"He is not with us," he said, in a thick patois. "We captured him. Santos took him as a hostage for God knows what reason. He's been a damned nuisance anyway."

The general stood in doubt. Several other rebels substantiated the first man's statement, then the whole band, as if unanimous in wanting to rid themselves of me.

The general was only half convinced. We were all marched to the local jail, and I was shut up with the rest. An hour later, the general sent for me. He asked endless questions. He brought along an interpreter who tested me in my own tongue, of which his own knowledge was strangely inexact.

"How long you stay here ? "

"What do you mean ? How long I've been here, or how long I intend to stay ? "

"How long you been here ? "

"A couple of years."

"How many years ? "

"A couple. Two."



"What part of England you come from?"

"London."

"You are a Scotsman?"

"No, London's not in Scotland."

"It is the same thing. I know. What you do in Venezuela, eh?"

"I am employed on the oil fields."

"Employed?"

"Working. On the oil fields."

"You are an American?"

"Good God, no. You have my papers."

"How we know these your papers?"

"You've got my photograph on them."

The interpreter stared, first at the photographs, then at me.

This kind of interrogation lasted, on and off, for three days. Every kind of petty and would-be grand official, came to peer at me and ask questions. Sub-officers, officers, super officers, and officials of police, commandants—all speared me with questions.

A lot of bowing and ceremony preceded the arrival of a big man with large white moustaches. He wore a blue coat, adorned with miles of gold braid. He came into my cell in a fluster, nervously changing from one foot to another, and wagging generous rear portions draped with bright blue cloth.

"Here he is, Excellency," said the police inspector. "We knew you could manage him. There aren't many people can speak English hereabouts."

His Excellency waited apprehensively. The police officer was inclined to linger, so Gold Braid ordered him away quickly. I guessed that His Excellency had enjoyed a reputation as a linguist in a town where no one came to test his powers.

He nervously looked around, making sure that no one was listening. Then he coughed, looked at me, looked away, went to the grille and peered through. A hurried scraping of footsteps suggested that the police officer had been hanging around, trying to get first-hand information about His Excellency's linguistic attainments.

His Excellency coughed again, screwed up his courage, and said in English:

"Hem! Englishman?"

"Yes, Englishman."

"All right, all right. Very good."

A painful silence succeeded this bright dialogue.

Then I said in English:

"I hope your Excellency will try to get me released. I must get back to my work."

His Excellency, obviously not having understood a word, said penetratingly :

"All right. Very good. Most nice. Yes."

He took another breath, repeated in a panic :

"It is all right. Yes. Nice."

Then he added suddenly, "I give you the good-day, sir," and backed out hurriedly. In the corridor I heard him giving to the interested police a detailed account of his conversation with me, pronouncing me an intelligent fellow, and undoubtedly an Englishman.

His Excellency's "conversation" with me was, I suppose, the decisive vote in my favour. The next day I was released.

In three days, by lorry, by car, on horseback, I was at my work again. I had been made much of a hero on the way by Venezuelan staff officers. I learned that the revolution had died, had simply petered out. The rebel force had dwindled. The leader had found himself almost alone when the moment came to strike.

# TREASURE-HUNTERS IN MEXICO

By

HAROLD T. WILKINS

“IF the *señor caballero yngles* knows where a rich treasure lies hidden in the vaults under the church of San Geronimo—*por la Santissima Virgen*, he will not need twice to ask me *y mis amigos intimos* to join him in so admirable an adventure ! ”

The speaker's black and beady eyes, with their snaky covert glance, glittered in his tawny face, half that of an Aztec Indian, as he leant back on his cane seat and blew a cloud of smoke from the long thin Mexican cigarillo he held between his almost sepia-coloured lips. His gaze became vacant and almost ecstatic as befitted one contemplating that last infirmity of minds not specially noble—the accursed thirst for unearned gold. The scene was in Mexico City after the Great War and the successful efforts of Weetman Pearson's engineers and their sanitary undertakings. The speaker was a *peón*, poor but by no means scrupulous, who knew as well as he did the back of his hairy hand the high snowy passes over which could be driven in comparative safety mules and burros laden with contraband which must be kept from the scrutiny of rurales or soldiers of the guard-houses on certain picturesque frontiers. My friend, *el señor caballero yngles*, was an English engineer and mining prospector—he died blind and crippled a year before in a West country infirmary—who had spent thirty years in glamorous and dangerous regions of Latin America hunting gold, and following the mystic *luz del dinero*, or “money light,” into the hidden recesses of the Gran Chaco, back of the Argentine, and along strange trails into the remote ranges of the Andes, in the Azangara region, where the Incas' massed gold still remains concealed. A few days before I met him in Mexico City he had returned from an adventurous trip

seeking one of those buried jungle cities in Guatemala, on the borders of Yucatan, where, so say native traditions, yet green in Indian memories, long trains of harried Aztec Indians, led by sallow priests, had gone east along secret mountain trails carrying with them great hoards of jewels, gold, and gems, including the great jewel of Votan, a splendid emerald, shaped in the wondrous semblance of a feathered adder. Taken from temples by the ancient causeways leading to Lake Tenochtitlan—that waterlocked city of old Mexico—these magnificent jewels and heaps of fine gold had been rushed away from the cruel and clutching hands of the Conquistadorean banditti fighting and robbing under the banner of Cortes. My friend had a chart of a mound deep in a jungle where a luckless Scot of the mid-nineteenth century had been shot by Indians, when he believed he had the combined wealth of Cræsus and Rockefeller within the reach of pick and spade. But that is another story.

We were lounging in a frowsy but picturesque *mésón*, or inn, hidden behind a maze of native tenements located in one of the *cuarteles* not far from Mexico City's one remaining waterway—the Viga Canal. Outside, the domes and cupolas of old Spanish Mexico gleamed under the rays of a fierce sun riding high in the sky, and judging by the way the dust-motes danced in the shimmering waves of heat, some of us would sigh for the time when the smoking peak of Popocatepetl would puff its signal that the sun was sinking behind the sierra towards his bed in the cool Pacific.

Inside this smelly *pulqueria* the air was thick with smoke from the cigarillos of thieves and pickpockets—there was a big prison close by—and men and women of more respectable classes, dark-eyed pretty brunettes, with slight moustachios, their hands on their hips, their lips whiffing gracefully from long cigarettes, *peóns* and their gaudily blanketed wives, all laughed and clapped their hands at the playing of an orchestra of four guitars and three clashing tambourines in the courtyard by which one entered the inn. The *músicos* broke into a lively national air, and at once men and women left the tables, and, flushed with plenty of pulque and mezcal, joined in a fandango. Girls in red and yellow petticoats whirled round with a flash of heavy gold and silver ornaments and a display of charms scarcely hidden in the loose folds of the filmy chemisettes which draped their slender torsos.

The engineer called the *mozo*, clad in shirt without sleeves, and ordered him to refill the large green tumbler of the *peón*.

He then spoke rapidly in a Mexican dialect I could not follow, though I fancied I caught the words *mañana* (to-morrow) and *alborado* (dawn). The fierce pulque was gulped down the Mexican's throat. He got up from the table, made a sweeping bow to each of us, and vanished through the portals of the courtyard where the orchestra was playing and out into the hot streets, redolent of odours far other than those of Ceylon or Araby's spices.

"I begin to think I was right, after all, in not taking the trail over the great White Pass to Klondyke in 1896," said the engineer.

"It's queer how slight accidents revolutionise one's most carefully laid plans. I was back from the highlands of Argentine when the news came of the Yukon bonanza. I packed up my prospector's kit, got rid of my shares in a promising mining concern, and was actually on the way to the railroad station to board a train for Monte Video, where I hoped to book a passage on some tramp steamer going round the Horn. I met a man I knew, but had not seen for some years. He told me of a lucky strike he had made back of the Gran Chaco. 'Where one finds gold another can,' I said to myself, as old gold-miners do. Besides, I hear it's so cold in the Yukon country that they have to thaw out the ground with steam . . . so I lit out on the trail to the north-west of the Argentine. Did I find any gold? Well I found a little, as a fact, but not enough to deter me from crossing the Andes into Bolivia, and one bright morning I stood on the quays at Callao waiting to go aboard a coasting steamer for Costa Rica, and so to Mexico," he laughed.

"*Mejico, Mejico*—why, the greasers say it's fuller of hidden treasures than hell is of devils! Now, my boy," he broke off, "I dare say you think I am a garrulous old fool, and wonder what all this has to do with my bringing you to this old *mesón*. No, no, I didn't bring you to this old *pulqueria* so as you could see the greasers and their dames dancing the light fantastic and go back to London to tell the folks you've seen life in the backblocks of Mexico City. Listen, my boy, I am on a treasure-hunting lay!"

He then told me a tale of a treasure cache. In this country such romantic stories take about three shapes—mission gold hidden by Jesuit fathers at the time of their expulsion from the old Spanish-American colonies; the loot of banks and Government offices hidden by bandits with lairs in wild and inaccessible mountain gorges; and the long-lost Aztec hoards.

The British engineer's story was that when the luckless Maximilian Habsburg adventured on his short-lived and foolhardy career as Emperor of Mexico, he followed the example of Simon Bolivar, the Liberator of Peru and Colombia, in 1819, by decreeing that all church gold and jewels should be confiscated, except such treasures as were in the form of mitres, chalices, chasubles, and the like. Of course, the wily priests made haste either to transform their treasures into these forms, or where this was not practicable or they feared confiscation, to hide them in vaults or under altars. Over the gold crosses and cups they pronounced a curse to fall on any seeking to find them. The engineer had, he whispered, found out such a cache in Mexico City.

"My boy," said he, glancing cautiously at a couple of swarthy Mexicans at a nearby table, whose eyes were bloodshot with the potations of the fiery pulque which their shaking hands could not convey to their lips without spilling the liquor, "there are about three hundred churches in Mexico City. All or most of 'em rich with carvings and paintings, that is, where the French army of the third Napoleon's day did not ransack the treasures. A day or two ago I met a Mexican of good family, but reduced in circumstances, owing to bad luck in a revolt in which his father took part. He sold me a chart for a few dollars. That chart shows where one of these treasures is concealed under the vaults of San Geronimo." (The reader will understand that this is not the actual name of the church.) "I have seen the padre of the church and squared him with a promise of a share in the treasure. This has always been my policy. If the treasure were in Indian territory I would promise 'em a new temple, or something they valued. So, barring accidents, we set out on the hunt to-morrow morning, early. That greaser fellow who just quitted our table is bringing some of his friends to help in any excavation work needed. Here's your chance to take a 'flier' with me. Are you on it?"

I reached out and solemnly shook his white, plump hand, with its well-cared-for nails, obviously not the hands of a manual worker.

"Like a shot," I said. "The adventure appeals as much to me as the one in ten chance of finding anything. I hope, though, we don't disturb many old bones down in that crypt. The smells may be bad."

The fandango had ceased. We followed a few tattered *peóns* out through the courtyard into the street. He arranged

with me to meet his party, about an hour after dawn, in one of the side-turnings off the principal promenade of the "Zocalo," a fine park in the centre of the city, where well-to-do folk and down-at-heel *peóns* listen to capital military bands on Sunday mornings.

"Not a word about this to anybody, my boy," was his parting advice.

"You're a stranger to this city. I've been here ten years. They'd have no compunction about clapping us into a stinking calaboose, and not letting us out in a hurry, if wind got about about this unauthorised treasure-hunt. An engine-driver friend of mine—an American—was kept for three months in a vile hole of this sort, because he had the misfortune to knock down and kill a Mexican *peón* by accident. Darned easy to get into a Mexican prison, but darned hard to get out, you'd find."

I was to have reason to remember this warning.

Came the next morning's dawn, when the top of smoking Popocatepetl was lit up by the young and ruddy sun, and the lovely towers and bell-domes of the great cathedral stood silhouetted in the fresh, keen air and early light. I had a hurried snack of breakfast, and put on a thick, woollen jersey—the early morning air is decidedly nipping in these altitudes at which Mexico City stands—and none too healthy for unacclimatised Europeans. The *mozo's* (waiter's) curiosity about my reasons for leaving the hotel to ramble about the city at so early an hour I did not choose to satisfy. I had not forgotten my friend's warning overnight.

Not to attract the attention of any inquisitive policeman who might be on patrol, I kept well in the shadows of the handsome buildings of the boulevards through which I passed. But I need have had no fear on that head. Life and the stream of traffic starts early in these Central American cities, but it struck me that an ominous stillness seemed to reign everywhere that morning. No clattering of hoofs on the asphalt, no motor-cars honk-honking by the side of the American trams which clank and grind their way through the wide *manzanas* (squares) to the outer *cuarteles* of the city. Odd, too, that no sandalled Indian (Aztec) women, gaudily blanketed, were arranging the blooming roses and blood-red poppies in the Flower Market, one of the sights of Mexico City. I glanced into the famous, or infamous, *Mercado de Volador*—the Mexican counterpart of the Thieves' Market at Hong Kong. No ill-favoured and frowsy scoundrel was

arranging the display of those articles of jewellery, rich shawls and silks, old coffers and massive keys which the buyer purchases without a request for a pedigree! Every *portero* (the Mexican equivalent of the Parisian concierge) seemed asleep, and the silence of the dead lay upon balconied houses with their heavily barred doors and gratings which I passed.

I struck down a quiet boulevard, under the maguey trees, went by a gigantic equestrian statue of some old Spanish king, and entered the *Zocalo*.

"Well, my boy, here you are then!" said a familiar voice, and I started round in surprise to find three sturdy Mexicans, laden with kits of some sort, with the engineer at their head.

"Come, no time to lose. The padre is waiting for us."

We turned down a path under the trees, quitted the park, and in five minutes were threading our tortuous way among one of those vile ghettos of tenements, inhabited by broken-down *peóns*, which one can find behind most of the fine main streets or boulevards of this old city.

"They console themselves with a bull fight every Sunday, poor devils," laughed the engineer, jerking his head at the dirty fronts. "This is a mighty dangerous district for a foreigner to be caught in after sundown. And the plague smells, and fevers—*phew!*"

Soon, the cupola of an ancient church rose above the roof-lines, and we turned into a leafy plaza.

A dark-jowled priest in a cassock was standing well back in the shadows of a massy door of heavy wood, blackened with age. He put a great piece of ironmongery—a cathedral key—to his lips, and beckoned to us.

"*Señores*, make no noise," he muttered.

"I wish not that the sacristan should know of your visit. If he did, others would soon know of it!"

The engineer grinned at me.

"He means the police."

The hefty key grated in the lock, and the heavy door was moved further ajar by a thrust from the priest's shoulders. In the rear of the padre we tiptoed across the sacristy, and groped our way in the deep gloom past shrines and under tattered banners till we stood in a transept by the side of the high altar. The padre lit a candle, which he put in a heavy, old-fashioned brass sconce, and signed to our *peóns*. Dropping their kit-bags on the flagstones, they bent down and prised up a heavy door set in the stone, with sunken hinges.



A great black hole gaped at our feet, and real old cathedral smells like a charnel-house, mingled with the indescribable odour of ancient stone, rose from the depths.

Suddenly, a noise like a rapid fusillade of pistol or rifle shots sounded outside the walls of the church.

I looked round startled at my friend, the engineer.

"Some fleeing *ladrón* (thief) with the police at his heels, I expect. Nothing uncommon, in this city," he said impatiently. "Go on, down with you, my boy!"

The padre, preceding us, descended into the bowels of the church. We stumbled down a long flight of badly-worn steps, and found ourselves in a great chamber, groined and buttressed with springing arches and thick piers. Ancient tombs, on which our candlelight flickered, cluttered up this crypt. I happened to be standing near enough to read an inscription on one hoary door:

"Here reposes the soul and body of the most respectable Padre Fray Gregorio, who died in 1660, and whose body was found without corruption, even 120 years after his death."

I struck a match, and in a niche of an adjacent ancient tomb saw two mummies in ecclesiastical robes, with shoes on their feet, of antique make, garnished with quaint buckles. The grisly museum of the dead reminded me of the strange vaults where centuries of dead priests in their habits, as they lived, are strung up like onions down in the depths of the weird Capuchin convent at Palermo. But our business was with other things than relics of bygone ages.

The engineer took a length of cord from his pocket. He walked up to one particular tomb, and tied one end of the string to a protuberance.

There was a queer hole in the top of this ancient tomb. I hitched my toe in a niche, and looked down at an amazing spectacle—the form of a priest, standing erect, six feet tall, with hands crossed on his breast, the grey robes falling round the corpse. He looked carved in stone, and had died three hundred years ago!

The engineer walked to the opposite side of the vault, and called me to hold the other end of the string, while he went to a third tomb. Here, tying a second line to the letter "H," in the sacred monogram "IHS," he walked to a tomb opposite, stretched the cord taut, till it intersected the first

cord. Then, from the point of intersection, he dropped a line with a plummet to the floor.

Padre, *peóns*, and myself watched breathlessly, while he drew a four-branched cross—the four cardinal points—at the spot on the flags where the plummet touched the stone. A pocket compass gave him the orientation, and from the north-east point of the cross he chalked a dead straight line to the wall. Then he carefully paced a number of steps till he reached a particular flagstone, which gave a hollow sound when tapped with a pick.

The excited *peóns* set to work with their tools, but hardly had the first clash of steel against stone ceased to echo in the vaults when we were rudely startled by noises of tramping overhead, and a dull sound much like that of heavy rifle-butts dropped on stone. The door at the top of the steps, by which we had come down, was thrown back with a crash, and a harsh and authoritative voice bade us at once ascend, or take the consequences.

The shaking *peóns*, the white-faced padre, and the dumb-founded engineer looked at each other in terror and amazement. Who had given the game away? Did?—the engineer looked at me. I shook my head. We perforce climbed the steps and stood before a squad of soldiers. A tall, raw-boned officer, exceedingly sallow in face and decidedly unpleasant in mien, demanded our papers. We had left them at our hotels. We protested we were British nationals engaged on lawful business.

He scowled, his moustaches bristled with anger. He said we were accursed "Yanquis," who had chosen to desecrate the tombs of a sacred edifice. We should be taken to the nearest police station. The soldiers moved up around us, and we left the church, with a hooting rabble at our heels, menacing the accursed gringos with death, sudden or painful.

"No use calling for the consuls, as we've broken the Mexican law by hunting for hidden treasures without a permit, or notifying the authorities. We're in a fix, but I've been in worse places before to-day. Must bluff 'em a bit," grinned the engineer, who had recovered his equanimity with remarkable quickness.

"But what a blamed fiasco," he swore. "Just when we had the dough in our hands. Wonder who told the authorities? It wasn't the padre, I'll be bound."

At the police station we were ordered to sit down in an ante-room and wait the arrival of the police commandant.

The guard scowled at us, and suggested we should be put with our backs against a wall, and a firing-party in front. Another Querataro, in fact, without the emperor! We gathered that a revolution had broken out that morning, and there was a new chief of police in Mexico City.

At the end of an hour and a half the new *jefe* came. He ordered our pockets to be turned out, and inspected every paper on our persons.

"You have a *derrotero* (a treasure chart), *señor*! Where is it?" he demanded peremptorily.

"A chart, *vuestra merced* (your honour)," smiled the engineer, in admirably simulated surprise and innocence. "That is absurd. What lies have been told you? We are merely students of the glorious history of your city, and were engaged on archæological researches in the vault of your renowned church, when we were rudely disturbed. We demand to see the British Consul."

The *jefe*'s beard fairly shook with rage. He clenched his fists at us.

"Lying *Yanquis*! You think to deceive me? Me? The chief of police? But I will find a way to unlock your lips. A month's holiday in the calabozo, rigorously *incomunicado* (isolated) will reveal the truth. *Bah, ladrones*! You took the padre into your confidence, did you not, but you forgot the sacristan? He is a good Mexican. He told us all."

The engineer made a cool retort.

"I have told you I have no *derrotero*, *señor*. The British Consul is a personal friend of mine. I had arranged to see him this evening. He will hear of this outrageous interference with the liberty of a British national. When he finds the appointment is not kept, he will cause inquiries to be made. There will be cables to the British Foreign Secretary in London. The British Government will intervene. Your superiors will call on you to make explanations. It will be an unpleasant situation in which I am most anxious your excellency shall not be placed."

A long argument followed, very acrimonious on the side of the enraged *jefe*. At the end of it we were shoved into a cell, none too clean, but heaven itself compared with the calabozo, the engineer assured me. Two hours later, when the *jefe* considered his dignity satisfied, the door was opened, and we were told we were free to go back to our hotels.

That was my first and last experience of treasure-hunting in Mexico City. But our poor *peóns*—no all-powerful Consul's

finger could be crooked on their behalf—spent three months in a vile prison, before a counter-revolt set them free.

To this day I wonder whether the treasure is still in those weird vaults, or whether it may have been long ago removed thence—years before this engineer acquired the *derrotero*. One never can tell, in these romantic affairs, and the sudden death of one of us prevented another search which had been planned.

Close to Mexico City is that inland lake in which the old Spanish soldiers under Cortes hurled wedges of gold and buckets of jewels in 1521, when they were retreating from the enraged Aztec soldiers led by the Priest of Votan. Generations of treasure-hunters have raked its bed over. The title-deeds of an estate bordering the lake, I was assured, mention this treasure. One President of Mexico, some years before the Great War, dragged its lava bed for the lost hoard. He did not find it—there are centuries of mud on top of those lost gems and gold wedges—but the Mexican and the Indian *peóns* descended from the men who threw the treasures into the mystic waters swear by all their gods that, on still evenings, after great storms, the strange *luz del dinero*, or money light, is seen at this spot. And there are white men who say they have seen these weird flames—whose origin is unknown—burning like flames of alcohol on the ground.

The veteran treasure-hunter, my British engineer friend, told me a few years ago :

“ I once had a gold mine, in South America, which owed its discovery to a small bluish-white light coming from a very rich piece of ore, gold quartz, lying on the surface. On various occasions I have dug where the light has been reported to have been seen, and always found metal of some sort below. Many treasures have been found by means of this light, and more would probably be unearthed but for the timidity of the peasants, who attribute the money light to some supernatural origin, and decide to give it a wide berth. The light is visible for a long way, and is believed to extend over a radius equal to that of the subterranean surface of the metal causing it. I hired a house in Mexico—an eastern province—where this light had been seen by an Indian women. I searched walls and floor, but not the right spot, yet a man who took the house a day or so later found a tin of old coins in the roof. . . . ”

Truly, as this veteran said, Mexico is a land of mystery and hidden treasures. Much of it has been buried by Mexican bandits who sallied out from wild mountain gorges to levy toll on trains of pack-mules and burros conveying gold and coins to the coast in the days of the Spanish domination. In more modern and recent times, revolutionaries and brigands looted state treasuries and banks and took the plunder to their mountain strongholds. A negro slave is known to have quitted the estancia of a Mexican gentleman to join the insurgents. He vanished from the ken of his master. Years later the Mexican was passing through the streets of a town when he saw a blind black man begging for the alms of travellers. The man's face seemed familiar. The Mexican went up to the negro, and was recognised. In gratitude for the aid of his former master, the negro told a romantic story of adventures and hidden treasures. He said he had joined a band of rebels who looted government treasuries and banks. They carried the booty to a mountain fastness. All railroad tracks leading that way were pulled up and bridges burnt. A timber bridge, spanning a gorge to the stronghold in which were the caches, was blown up, and one day the bandits sallied out to do battle with government troops. All were captured and shot or killed, except the negro, who had been blinded. Said he :

“ Come a little way out of the town, and I will show you, master, a place from which you can see the mountain marking the site of our old stronghold.”

Leading the blind man by the hand, the Mexican went out into the country, till they reached the spot from which the negro said the gold mountain could be seen. Political upheavals have prevented the Mexican from going after the bandits' hidden gold, but he has handed the chart over to his son, who was certainly alive in Mexico a year ago. That such hoards really exist in Mexico is suggested by the experience of Señor Francisco Calderon, owner of an estancia at Oaxaca. This estate was seized in 1815 by bandits under the infamous chief “ El Solo,” a “ Lone Hand ” of Oaxaca Gulch, who held it for five years. El Solo robbed single-handed, and banked his winnings in the earth. The *señor* was ploughing a field, a year or so ago, when some obstacle in the ground caught his ribs and violently punched them. He bent down with an oath, and was amazed to find at the bottom of the furrow a large wooden box, out of whose rotten boards there

tumbled a golden flood of coins dating from 1790 to 1820, and at the bottom a number of heavy gold ornaments and jewels looted from churches and private houses. In Mexico City a jeweller assured the lucky *señor* that the hoard was worth about £80,000.

There are the glittering legends of buried Aztec treasures of fabulous dimensions. Their traditions still linger among the *peóns* in outlying Mexican provinces. One of these concealed Aztec hoards is said to consist of seven large earthenware jars, five feet high, and three feet in diameter, in the centre, tapering towards each end, and loaded with gold-dust.

My old friend had arranged with a Mexican financier to search for one of these hoards, and had handed over the clues before he died. Unfortunately, he did not disclose to me the name of the Mexican, and I have never been able to find what luck attended this fascinating, if rather fantastic, treasure-hunt.

"*Si, señor,*" said a *mozo* at a hotel in Mexico City, "it is not so many months ago, when our newspapers told us of a *coronel inglés* (British colonel) who was planning to fly in an airplane into the land of the Yaqui *Indianos*. He had heard of a rich cache of silver ingots in an abandoned mine, last known to have been worked in the eighteenth century. They say he carried a supply of bombs which he would use, in time of emergency, to repel the turbulent Yaquis, who shoot gringos and Mexicanos at sight. Yet, as soon as the news came, the commandant in Sonora sent a company of soldiers, who escorted the British colonel and his friends across the frontier. *Hijos de las putas*, but they were worse than the *Tejanos* (Texans) of the plains!"

Many of these abandoned mines, and some of the lost hoards of gold and silver, are rightly or wrongly attributed to the Jesuits of the "*misiones*" who were expelled from the colonial dominions of the old court of Madrid. The story is that in Mexico and in lonely recesses of the vast ranges of the Andes, in Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador, the priests cunningly hid their gold, and laid poison traps around the hidden *tapados* (or treasure mounds). There are those who deny that the Jesuits buried any treasure in Central South America, but the fact remains that, in 1897, a jar of gold—piled up in a burnt olla—was found hidden in the walls of the old ruined mission of Santa Maria, in Baja California, and the circumstances plainly testify that neither buccaneers nor Indians made this cache!

While I was on the trail of these stories—which are often wrongly mixed up with the romantic Peg Leg Mine, or three mystic buttes, in the desert ranges of Arizona, strewn with nuggets of “tellurian” or placer gold—I was told the strange tale of an Englishman, who, in the spring of 1896, headed a band of old-timer miners—as hard as the flints and tough as the mesquite and sage bushes on these alkali plains—on an expedition into the deserts of Sonora to seek a long-lost treasure of the “mission gold.” The story runs that when Mexico was first colonised by the Spaniards, a body of monks and priests went into the dangerous western parts of what is now the Mexican state of Sonora. The country was inhabited, as it is to-day, by fierce tribes of Yaqui Indians, and, as time went on, an enormous amount of gold drifted out of the possession of the Indians into that of the monks of the mission. One estimate puts the amount at *two tons* of gold, which, at the ruling price of about £5, 16s. an ounce, would, to-day, be worth some £414,000. All this was hidden by the monks. Stormy times came on the mission, when the order went forth from the Court of Madrid in far-away Spain, that monastic orders who were alleged to have engaged in political intrigues should, by a certain day, quit his Spanish Majesty’s overseas possessions.

Came a day when the turbulent Yaquis rose in rebellion and drove the monks from the Yaqui country. Before their retreat from the estates of the mission, the monks are said to have buried the gold and silver under the altar, and to have pronounced a curse on any seeking for the forbidden treasure. The Yaquis razed the mission buildings to the ground, but, to avoid the curse, removed their huts from the site.

In the autumn of 1895, an Englishman named Simmonds met a man in a saloon in Tucson City, Arizona, who was down and out and at death’s door, owing to prolonged hardships and starvation. The Englishman acted the part of the Good Samaritan, and took the man to a hotel, where he was put to bed, and a doctor sent for in haste. Heroic efforts snatched the sick man out of the jaws of death, but for three weeks his life hung in the balance, while he tossed about his bed in violent delirium. He uttered words and cries betokening strange adventures in some wild regions across the frontier in Mexico. When he recovered, he told a remarkable story of a treasure-hunt in the 1860’s. The sick man became well—his constitution being of the toughest—and was persuaded to guide a

band of seven Arizona miners to the scene of hidden gold of the abandoned Mission of the Yaqui country.

Led by Frank Montoya, the man who had been at death's door a few months before, the treasure-hunters set out in the spring of 1896, and trailed across 250 miles of desert, east of the Rio Colorado, burying water in ollas, and food in caches, as they went along. There was no chance of living on the country ; for neither water nor food, nor any edible wild animals—except lizards, snakes, and “rattlers”—can be got in this arid region of fever and death. A terrible trail was that of these modern Argonauts, across the Mexican desert. One man died on the way, and another was killed in an encounter with armed Indians, mounted on the backs of swift mustangs. It was clear that these bands of mounted Indians were lying in wait for the adventurers, who were forced to take turns in the night watches on the desert, a magazine of loaded rifles at hand, to ensure that no lurking Indians stampeded the burros or rushed the camp in the dark hour before sunrise. On the one hundred and sixtieth day the adventurers topped a high bluff overlooking the banks of a little, limpid water-course, irrigating a green meadow in the midst of which was the site of the abandoned mission which they were seeking.

Ten miles away they could see the smoke rising from the huts of the Yaquis. The hunters took care to keep well below the sky-line, so as to give these redoubtable Indians no chance for sniping. The gold, according to the *derrotero* of Montoya, lay under flat stones covered with dirt and not far away from their camp in the lee of the wooded bluff.

They eagerly waited for the darkness, keeping in the shelter of a cavern in a cleft of the rocks, from which, with sticks and rifle-butts, they had evicted and exterminated the deadly snakes and the terrible tarantulas, whose clicking mandibles inject poison into the veins of animals and sleeping men. Then, in wild excitement, the hunters made for the stones, prised them up with picks, and unearthed a large amount of gold, of which they loaded two hundred pounds weight each on each of the six burros. All traces of the excavation were carefully erased, and at night, under the cover of darkness, they set out on the homeward trail across the alkali desert to the American border. On the tenth night mounted Indians again attacked them, clearly determined that the hunters should not carry the gold out of the country. Montoya was shot through the eye and died almost instantly. The Indians retreated, but as the adventurers went on, day after



day, it was to find that the Yaquis had surrounded every waterhole where water and food had been cached !

One of the white "gringos" went mad with thirst. It is a region where the atmosphere acts on the body with the suction of a most absorbent sponge.

"Every hour of the day and night, your carcass cried out for *water, water, water* ! You could drink and drink your water-bottle dry, but never slake your raging thirst," said one of the survivors to me, when I met him in Arizona, in 1930.

"One of our company went mad with thirst, and we had to shoot him to prevent his killing the rest of us in his frenzy. The air of this hell-fire desert sucks every drop of moisture from your skin. We fought several pitched battles with the lurking Indians, and the painted devils retreated every time, but not before they either shot down or rushed away the burros on which we had laden our gold. Out of the eight who set out from Tucson City, I guess I am the only one now alive who came back from that trip. I had three pounds of gold in my 'poke.' My pardner has long ago gone where the rattlers won't bite him. I reckon there have been about twenty expeditions after that lost Mission gold of Sonora in the last twenty years, and they've all come to bad ends. Sure, kid, there's a real bad curse on that 'ere gold !"

On the other side of the Gulf of California is a land of strange and terrible memories and of weird legends of sudden death and adventure. Some remarkably potent curse seems to hang over the hidden treasures of the coast and interior of *Baja California*, as the Mexican maps call this tongue of land, where the old buccaneers often wopded and watered their ships whose keels were foul with many months of marine growths and barnacles. Were this region better known, it would be the Mecca of treasure-hunters. I am often asked about this unknown land of mystery and memories, and my inquirers are men who lack neither the spirit of adventure nor the desire to prove that they are none too scrupulous.

One of these hidden hoards lies in the practically unexplored Cocopah range, west of the Rio Colorado, and well up on the eastern side of Baja California. The best way to reach this region to-day, would be to detrain at the depôt of Yuma on the South Pacific Railroad.

Some sixty or more years ago an American syndicate called the Treasure Trove Company was started to hunt up this cache. They had a chart derived, in remarkable circumstances, from a Spaniard, one Pedro Pedrillo, who, in the spring

of 1873, tramped into San Diego, Cal., footsore, down and out, but excited. He met a number of old-timers in a saloon and told them his story. Said he :

" I had been two weeks prospecting in the Japa country, on the slopes of the Cocopah range, when, one afternoon, in the mountains—which even the Indians will not enter—I found a crude, wooden cross rudely carved with an inscription in Spanish, telling the finder to dig below. I removed the top soil, and my pick hit on a metal canister looking as though it had been hammered out of an old helmet or part of a breast-plate. Inside the canister was a scroll in faded ink, made out of some berry you find in these mountains. The writer said :

" ' To whomsoever may chance to find this writing : I, captain Jesus Arroa, captain of the brig *Isabella Catolica*, of 800 tons and 15 guns, with a crew of 25 men, say that we were wrecked in a great storm off the coast of California, on 29 March 1682. After we had struck on reef, we made our way ashore in the ship's cutter, carrying naught with us, save five cutlasses, and an old arquebus, which was all we had saved from our buccaneering. Designing to keep ourselves alive by killing game, we struck inland towards a range of mountains, which lay distant from us to the north-east. Here we met game in plenty, and bears abounded. Our single piece was of much service to us. Eight months of that time, we saw no human beings beside ourselves. Some of our company who had mined gold in the lands about the South Seas (Peru) one day saw gleams of sand-gold in the mountains. This season much rain and wind stormed down the mountains, as it had never done hitherto, and in the ravines we at once began to gather and wash the gold from the rocks and sands, and to store our treasure in hopes of future deliverance, when we designed to carry it to the coast, where, peradventure, a ship might chance to touch. We stored and hid great quantities of gold. Then misfortunes came thickly on us. A band of painted savages of great stature, with enormous bows in their hands, bore down on our camp in the mountains. All our gold-washing was stopped. They shot a cloud of arrows, killing one of our company and wounding two. We retreated from our camp, but the big warriors followed us for two days, fighting and being resisted by us. I write this, fearing that death may come to us all to-morrow. Committing my soul to the Mother of God and all the saints in glory, I will tell where we have hidden our great treasure. I pray that this writing fall

into the hands of a good Christian, whom I solemnly charge to buy, with a portion of the treasure, a golden candlestick for the altar of San Diego, in Seville, to say masses for my soul.' "

The pirate captain Arroa gave minute directions how to locate the cache of gold. Pedrillo went to Vallejo, where he fitted out an expedition of twenty men, armed with the latest rifles, to invade the Cocopah country, which, as I have said, lies west of the Rio Colorado, high up in Baja California. It may be, as so often happens in the case of these old hoards, that a landslide has obliterated the cache, for, though I have ransacked the files of journals in San Diego and Los Angeles of the 1870's and 1880's, I can find no subsequent tidings of the fate of the Pedrillo expedition. Not a soul in San Diego or San Francisco knows a word of the queer story. We must surmise, as is not improbable, that Pedrillo and his husky prospectors left their bones to bleach in the thirst and fever-stricken wastes guarding the approaches to the Cocopah ranges. Possibly, they were shot by wild Indians, lying in wait at rare water-holes.

A few words about the topography of this obscure region of the Cocopah mountains may be of interest to would-be treasure-hunters in Lower California. The great Colorado Desert runs to the base of the Cocopah sierras, and the region in between the Hardy river and the Cocopah range is dreaded by the Mexicans owing to the extreme heat and lack of water-holes. Says the American traveller, Mr. A. W. North, who has ranged over these wilds :

"I had spent a night burning a signal-fire to save a hunter lost in this desert, and the ensuing afternoon had been advised by the *ranchero* Juan, an experienced guide, that it was so dangerous a region that he had never dared venture upon it."

The placer (?) gold and the caches of gold made by the old Spanish buccaneers of the ship *Isabella Catolica*, about 1682, may lie either in the Cocopah sierras, or in the Cocopah Desert, behind the mountains. It was across this desert that the Catarina Yumas took the war trail to the Colorado and the Gila river country, and over these same burning sands marched filibuster Walker and his "cornstalk" soldiers in April 1854. Again, in 1799, adventurers led by the Spanish governor Arrilliga made the trip in safety. Take the experiences of an

explorer on a hot August day in these regions of drought and dessication—they are a warning of what the treasure-seeker may expect: a footwalker can last out eight hours without water, and then come the delusions of insanity—the crazed man sees ahead of him a mirage of cool water-pools ringed with green trees, for ever beyond his reach. He takes off his clothing and tries to plunge into the waters. The next and merciful stage is the oblivion of death. The dry heat of the Cocopah sierras sucks moisture from the perspiring body, and induces a constant crying-out of the system for water, water, plenty of it! Pools of salt and alkaline water strewn with crystals abound and shimmer with deceit in the hot air. All this means that the adventurer should choose well his time of the year, and adequately prepare his equipment and commissariat, for the long trail from the Rio Hardy, a tributary of the Colorado river, to the highlands off the north-east slopes of the Cocopah sierras, which latter are a barren range of mountains about 3000 feet high, with crumbling yellow rock in place of soil. There are thickets of thorny mesquits, fierce nettles, and slimy swamps and steaming lagoons to be passed, till the treasure-hunters reach, at the base of the Cocopah range, a trail passing through willows and grass. Toads as large as a rabbit abound here, while the long-haired, dark and heavy-featured Cocopah Indians are found dwelling in shacks, or *remados*. Those enterprising hikers who have taken movie-cameras with them may find some difficulty, since, unless they have greatly changed, these Indians show fierce repugnance against the use of cameras on their vile bodies and surroundings. They have absolutely refused to be photographed in very recent times.

The "terrible" island of Tiburon is one of the sinister treasure caches of the gulf of Baja California. It is part of the state of Sonora, and lies on the eastern shores of the gulf. Aztec hoards of gold, gems, and jewels are said to have been hidden somewhere on this strange island, so called because of *los tiburones*, or man-eating sharks. On it live fierce tribes of Seri Indians, whom even the valiant conquistadores, to say naught of the modern Mexican army, have never been able to subdue. On shore the Seris, who are cannibals, have poisoned arrows in readiness for intruders; in the seas around, Father Neptune has set a dual guard of shark-teethed reefs and man-eating fishes. The Seris love not the foreigner, whether he be a gringo or a native Mexican, and, in 1929, they shot poisoned arrows into the bodies of three American adventurers.

who tried to land on Tiburon from a little boat. Not a white man survived to tell the tale !

The Englishman, Lieutenant Hardy, who was travelling in these wild regions in 1825-1829, tells how he heard from Senor Monteverde—who was of Italian origin and lived in Pitic, in Sonora state—that a fine green and red coral is found on this island. An Italian priest was said to have embarked for Tiburon, with a capital of \$200 and a wooden diving-bell, made in the gardens of Chapultepec, near Mexico City. Two months later, the priest returned to the mainland with native gold and pearls, part of which he had bought from the Seris. The whole was worth about £40,000. Says the wise Hardy :

“ Unfortunately, this priest was prevented from telling his own story, he having died many years ago.”

Hardy adds that the folk of Pitic in the State of Sonora firmly believe that much virgin gold existed in Tiburon Island, but could not be got at owing to the “ unpacified ” Seris having barred the road. An old Spanish governor, of the days before revolt of the Spanish-American colonies against Madrid, made a pretext of incursions suffered from the Seris, and sent 1000 soldiers to the island, but after a considerable time, and the loss of many men, the soldiers returned to the mainland, having abandoned the enterprise. Treasure-hunters may like a few topographical details about this strange island.

It is located in 28° 10' N. and 115° 10' W. ; and is thirty miles long by some ten to fifteen miles broad. There is no potable water on the island, and the natives are said to depend for supplies on fluid obtained from a cactus growing thereon. Tiburon is said to be very barren, but the people are of splendid physique—adult men and women being often six feet tall—and go practically naked even in the rather cold winter. They are lazy, build no houses, and lie just where they happen to be at nightfall. Their sloth also inclines them to eat their food raw instead of cooked. In the days of the Conquest, the Tiburon islanders, then said to be a people of high culture, numbered about 35,000 souls, but, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, says Don Jose Maria Retio, they had dwindled to 1500 people living in mainland villages, hunting and fishing. Yet, to-day, despite their primitive or Spartan customs of killing all sickly and deformed babes, they are, according to Mexican authorities, degenerating, year by year. They worship the sun and moon, and believe that the pelican made the earth,

but this does not prevent them from hunting the bird. At the coming of the new moon, the Seris offer a fermented drink to that planet, and this is the time to shun their ceremonies, which develop into horrible orgies threatening the lives of any foreigners who chance to be on the island. They paint their bodies with red, white, and blue stains, derived from plants in the woods, sell their daughters to the highest bidders, and capture rattlesnakes—by which the island is infested—which they thrust into pits, where they are maddened by prods with poles. Meat is then lowered, and the snake venom, deposited on it, is used for poison for the arrows. Naturally, a wound from such an arrow, in the absence of anti-venene, kills very quickly.

It is on record that a French authoress, Madame Titayana, the Italian colonel Masturzi, and a lone hermit, the American John Thompson—who has lived for many years on a small island in the Gulf of California, landed on the island in 1930. When they approached its shores, the wild Seris lined the wooded banks, brandishing bows and poisoned arrows, with very hefty spears. Madame is said to have sung them a Spanish ditty, which so charmed that a landing was permitted, and even a movie camera was used. However, the three foreigners took care not to outstay their welcome, but quitted Tiburon's shores in eight days after the landing.

Lieutenant Hardy, who, in 1826 or 1828, landed on Tiburon to cure a sick Seri woman, says he took an hour's walk into the interior towards the eastern coast of the island, but saw no signs of pearl shell. On his return, he went another circuitous walk, but again saw no traces of a "*creadero de oro*" (gold-mine of native making) :

" I showed a specimen of grain gold to the Indians, but as they manifested the greatest ignorance of that substance, as well as unfeigned curiosity about it, I no longer intend to doubt that the idea of a gold spot exists only in the lively imaginations of the people with whom I had conversed on the subject in Pitic " (*Hardy*)

The old Spanish viceroy, in the early period of the settlement of Sonora, Mexico, met with considerable opposition from the Seris of Tiburon Island, who, like Malay pirates, neither gave nor expected quarter. Hardy was exploring the possibilities of Tiburon for the London General Pearl and Coral Fisheries Association.

The story of treasure-hunters' expeditions to this sinister island is a lurid one. In 1879, two prospectors, digging for water, found placer gold at a depth of six feet. (So, perhaps, Hardy was unlucky?) They worked for ten days and panned about \$8000 in gold-dust and nuggets, were ambushed, but managed to elude the rampageous Seris, who were out on the warpath. Later on, a small party went back, but dead men never returned to tell tales. Some one, by questioning various Mexicans in the coast ports on the mainland, derived a romantic story to the effect that, about the time of Emperor Montezuma, of the Aztec empire, a great hoard of gold was spirited from Mexico City away from the Castilian army of Cortes, and buried on Tiburon Island. A search for the Aztec hoard was accordingly made in 1893, when a certain Lieutenant Robinson, an Englishman, with three comrades, landed to hunt up this cache. Robinson's story was that treasure valued at 19,000,000 gold pesos left behind by Cortes, when he had to retreat from Mexico City, was spirited away, and never recovered when that warrior returned from Vera Cruz and recaptured the citadel. Cortes had, said Robinson, traced the progress of the lost treasure to the western coast of Mexico, but Robinson held that the treasure was eventually brought to Tiburon Island in 1790, by the schooner *El Pato*, which went to the bottom of the swirling waters of hell (*El Infiernillo*) off Tiburon, after the gold had been cached on the island. He knew that no one had explored the interior of the island, and when he and the three others landed on the island, they had a friendly reception from the islanders in a large village. But the Seris bear an evil name! One night, they rose and treacherously assassinated two of the men, while two survivors somehow managed to escape to the mainland, and informed the Mexican commandant at Guayamas, who sent a company of soldiers to punish and, if possible, exterminate the Tiburones. But those fearsome Indians had met other expeditions sent for precisely that purpose in past years! The Mexican soldiers failed in their mission; because, for one thing, the island is honeycombed with squirrel-burrows, and the Seris, racing across the desert, laughed at the pursuing cavalry, panting in the heat and threatened every moment with broken necks caused by the horses plunging their pasterns into the warrens. Nature was fighting for the Seris, as she has been doing for centuries past. Moreover, not a bit of fodder can be had for horses or cattle in these hot and thirst-stricken wastes.

Forty expeditions have been sent by the Mexican Govern-

ment, in the fifty-five years prior to 1855, to subdue these indomitable islanders, who have kept their blood pure by putting to death any of their race who marry foreigners. How, too, should soldiers burdened with military impedimenta hope to outrun and catch the fleet Seris, who are said actually to run down deer and capture them with their hands?

Newspaper men, prospectors, and explorers who have set out to unriddle the mysteries of this strange island have all met death at the hands of the cannibal Indians. Two years after the murder of Lieutenant Robinson and his two comrades, on Tiburon, an American, Captain George Porter, and a sailor named Johnson, in the schooner *World*, landed and camped on the east side of Tiburon. They were collecting feathers, pearls and curios, when Seris stole on the camp. Firing a shot-gun, Porter killed seven of the "varmints," after he had been mortally wounded. But he and the sailor were overborne by numbers of the painted warriors, and put to a dreadful death.

Then in 1895, the U.S. Bureau of Ethnology, of Washington, D.C., sent out Professor W. J. McGee to make a report on the island, but he, wisely, never went into the interior. He said that the Indians were tall, of good physique, and spent a lot of their time prowling through the bush looking for enemies. McGee was followed, in the fall of 1904, by Professor H. E. Miller, superintendent of the schools of Arizona, a brave man, who, with Captain Gus Orlander of the ship *Eliza*, landed on Tiburon to locate a deposit of radium pitch-blende. From that day to this, Professor Miller has never been seen; but on the Seri frontier, in 1907, a relief expedition found two severed human heads fastened to the ends of a blood-stained crossbar, which had been nailed across an upright plank, set in the ground. Each head was fastened to the wood by strips of leather cut from a camera case, and on the inside of one of the strips was a partly obliterated name, a capital "M," a small "e," and "r." All around, earth hammered out into a ring by dancing feet showed where the savages had held a wild corybantic orgy during the torture of their American victim. Professor Miller is one of the noble company of martyred scientists. In January 1908, U.S. Lieutenant G. R. Chaffee found poor Miller's abandoned sloop up the Hardy river, at the head of the Rio Colorado, some three hundred or more miles to the northward of this sinister island.

Whether in view of the cry for gold, gold, hard, bright, shining and cold, now clamant all over the world, hardened prospectors will be permitted by the Mexican Government to



take out airplanes, geophysical instruments, or radio locators, and hunt for the hidden Aztec hoards of 19,000,000 gold pesos, or fork the deposits of placer and virgin gold, said to have been found on this island of Tiburon, rests on the knees of the gods of treasure-hunting.

As to treasure purely and simply, without reference to archæology, one could not gain a more vivid idea of the immense wealth of Mexico after the days of the Conquistadores—when the phase of violence and plunder had passed into that of settlement—than is given in the *Concise History of Spanish America*, published in London, 1741. The writer preserves anonymity, but he is clearly possessed of first-hand knowledge of his subject. The Spanish King's Exchequer, in Mexico, in the year 1730, received the enormous sum of 10,000,000 dollars or £2,000,000, representing one-fifth of the value of all the silver taken from the Mexican mines in that year. This sum was paid to the King of Spain, and the total amount of the silver mined in that one year was thus five million marks, which, taking the value of the mark at eight ounces of silver at five shillings an ounce, was worth £10,000,000 (English). What, then, must have been the immense stream of wealth in silver and gold flowing to old Spain in the two centuries elapsing since the ravishing of old Mexico by Cortes and his successor? And, be it remembered, no account is here taken of the golden river flowing to Cadiz and Seville from the other dominions of the Spaniards in South America.

The revenues of the Archbishopric of the Royal City of Mexico were £70,000 a year, about 1740, of which the Archbishop took for himself £15,000 a year and prodigious sums by way of perquisites. This arch-prelate actually collected 500,000 pieces of eight in the form of a levy of one-tenth on the incomes of eleven prelates receiving at least £1,200,000 per annum! Truly, these good and holy fathers had taken all they could and followed the Cross!—or, rather, Cræsus!

So many splendid emeralds looted from Mexico poured into Europe in the iron-bound chests of galleons crossing the bar of old Seville, after the irruption of the Conquistadores under Fernando Cortes, that the astounded jewellers and lapidaries of Madrid, Genoa, and Venice were fain to cry "Hold, enough, or you break the market price!" From the new Mexican province of Golden Castile, when the country was christened "Nueva Espana," Cortes took five magnificent emeralds worth 100,000 crowns. The first emerald was cut in the shape of a rose; the second, as a hunting-horn; the

third, a golden-eyed fish ; the fourth, a bell—the clapper of which was a large pear-shaped pearl, on whose rim were engraved the Spanish words, “ Blessed be him who made thee ” ; the fifth was a cup for which a Genoese lapidary offered 40,000 crowns. This wondrous emerald-cup was hung on four little gold chains attached to the person by a large pearl. Around the gold brim of the cup was engraved in Latin a legend : “ A greater has not arisen born of women.”

Fate, however, played Cortes a malignant trick in sending these great jewels his way. They lost him the court favour of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, King of Spain, who had not then retired into a monastery among the oaks of the Tagus valley to sample fish, fried, boiled, fricasseed, and potted anchovies, and to celebrate his own funeral. The Empress wife of Charles V had expressed a desire to possess jewels more remarkable for the extraordinary workmanship displayed in their cutting, than even for their intrinsic value. Cortes was about to be married and had promised the jewels as a wedding-gift to his young wife. He kept to his word, and lost the royal favour.

No doubt the fanatic zeal of the first Christian Catholic missionaries to Mexico destroyed many precious articles made of emeralds and sacred to Votan. The gems were ground to dust and dispersed to the four winds as remnants of execrable heathen rites. In the chief hall of Justice, in old Mexico, was a throne of pure gold studded with turquoises and other gems. On the pedestal opposite the throne was placed one of those indications of the dementia which lay at the root of this strange civilisation which priests and sacerdotalism had gripped by the throat. It was a human skull crowned with an enormous emerald of a pyramidal form, over which nodded an aigrette of gay plumes and gems. A canopy of bright feathers waved above the throne, its centre sparkling with gold and jewels. Montezumas' mantle was fastened with emeralds, many in number and of great size and beauty in their rich setting of pure gold. Nevertheless, as in Peru, some of the richest treasures of old Mexico were hidden so well that all efforts to find them in the many centuries elapsing since the days of Cortes have proved unavailing.

The modern treasure seeker may be referred to a rare German manuscript, entitled *Zerissene Blätter aus dem Buche der Americanischen Urvölker-Geschichte von Tito Visino* : Torn leaves from the book of the history of the first American races, by Tito Visino. It points to a rich buried treasure waiting to

be found in modern Mexico. A certain Fray Francisco Nuñez de la Bega, Archbishop of Chaiapas, South Mexico, found a cave called the *Dark House*, in which the treasure Teoamoxtli, and the sacred tapers of Votan, the heart of heaven—made of gold with a symbol formed of an enormous emerald cut into the shape of a feathered adder—were kept before the coming of the Spanish Conquistadores. This treasure consists of large clay and stone vases encrusted with emeralds of immense value and other gems. The spot where these royal treasures are now concealed has baffled all efforts to find it. "These riches since the reverend man's visit have again become invisible, at least in the form they then bore," says the MS. in cryptic words. "The clay vessels, the writings, the paintings, and mummied *dantas* (tapers) and great store of copal and incense have been burnt and everywhere destroyed, but that the *gold and silver articles and other precious stones are still extant there is no doubt.*"

Edward Davis, the good-natured Buccancer of Dampier's day, used to speak of commissions made at the capstan-bars of the pirate-ships, and it must be at this place that a certain modern adventurer concocts his incredible anchor-watch yarns of fantastic gold altars and massy chests of jewels taken out of old houses where they were hidden by pale-avised Spanish señoras and fiery-eyed fanatic friars, what time Morgan's buccaneers were reading *their* commission at the flames of their own muzzles, at the sacking of Portobello and Panama. Be that as it may!

The yarn of Morgan's buried gold was again clothed in flesh and blood in September 1927, when newspapers in New York and London reported that Mr. Louis Morgan, claiming to be a descendant of Sir Henry Morgan, the late seventeenth-century buccaneer, was organising an expedition to set out from Frisco's golden gates for some lonely beach on Panama. This treasure is alleged to be hidden near Darien Bay, Panama, and Mr. Morgan was represented as saying that he had a secret chart which he believes was passed from Sir Henry Morgan to his descendants, and finally came into the possession of Mr. Louis Morgan's father, who was public prosecutor of the town of Victoria, Texas. Eight men, according to this tradition, buried the loot which Morgan took from Panama in 1671. The men were afterwards murdered, and Sir Henry alone survived. The leader will recognise the bogle, in the shape of the slain pirate, who has to guard the cache for ever and aye. A faded parchment roll is said to speak of treasure

"beneath a monnde of roques" along Panama's coast. Morgan of the seventeenth century, as we have said before, was not the man to bank his plunder anywhere but in his own stout buccaneering barque, rigged with the curses dark of the luckless buccaneers he stole away from off Panama. His last will and testament is stored in the archives of Port Royal, Jamaica.

Mr. Morgan, we are told, has enlisted the services of a Captain Pearson, and both men have set sail in the forty-foot auxiliary launch *Saxon* for Panama, where they hope to secure the permission of the Panama Government to hunt up this cache of Sir Henry Morgan's lieutenant.

A year or so ago an advertisement inserted in a well-known London newspaper attracted attention to a romantic treasure alleged to lie hidden in the jungles of Central America, where it was buried by the sallow, dark-eyed priests of the Mexican god Votan, in the far-off days of the plundering Conquistadores under Cortes. The notice invited young and adventurous Englishmen to apply to an explorer, Dr. Thomas Gann, for papers connected with a treasure found about 1867 by an Englishman named Carmichael, who was hunting Indians invading the frontiers of British Honduras. He captured some of the Indians, who gave him gold ornaments of great age, which they said they had fished out of a lagoon deep in the forest near a ruined pyramidal temple of great size. The temple-mound has, hence, been named the "Carmichael mound," and there must be to-day more than one unfortunate man in Great Britain or the U.S.A. who curses the day he heard of this mound. One Scotsman who set out on the quest was shot in the hand by lurking Indians who recall the curses of their ancestors on the white men—destroyers of the old Aztec civilisation. Hardly any wonder, then, that Dr. Gann's young wife is said to have put her foot down on any further attempts of her husband to look up this hoard of the Carmichael mound. It may well be true that, into such recesses as these, trains of priests led native Aztecs, laden with treasures, when our lord Don Cortes retreated from Mexico City, in 1521.

Montezuma's diadem, presented to Cortes by that luckless king, whom he took to be the god Quetzalcoatl returning from the twilight land, is to-day in the Natural History Museum in Vienna, where it passed from the hands of the Emperor Charles V *via* the Tyrolese branch of the Habsburgs. The feather crown is a wonderful object, whose outer ring is woven of the golden-green plumes of the quetzal bird. No more than four are grown by each male bird, so that the rare feathers

are exceedingly costly. The crown is studded with numerous gold plates, and the beautiful feathers of turquoise-blue, brown, white, and emerald green, shaped into exquisite figures, make the jewel one fit to rank with any in the regalia of any monarch in Europe or India.

Gold, gold is the lure drawing to-day, as it did in the time of Drake and Elizabeth, hundreds of hard-bitten adventurers who take the trail from Meridan in Yucatan, to the Davis mountains in Texas. More than one member of the Mexican air force swears that he has flown his machine over the secret hiding-place of the Aztec hoards. In Yucatan, native *peóns* whisper traditions of hidden jungle cities where gold collected by the priests of Montezuma was buried each year for safety. Each year the priests of Votan summoned the natives from round about for a distance of more than five hundred miles to worship at the temples of the gods. The ceremonies lasted a week, and concluded with the placing of an offering of pure gold, by every father of a family, at the foot of the shrine. The gold was daily collected and either stored in a room at the rear of the temple, or hidden in subterranean chambers, where a clan of men, specially consecrated to the service, guarded the treasure of the gods. Old Mexico had its counterpart of the negro slain and buried on top of the coffin-vault holding the treasure. They were criminals, chained and fettered together, who had been forced to dig vaults for the gold. A great door on top of the vault opened to admit the gold, after which earth was thrown on to the door, stamped firmly down to hide all traces, whereupon the felons were slain as sacrifices to the gods, and their corpses buried in the earth only a few feet or so above the vault. The Aztecs cleverly argued that any treasure-hunters would conclude the vault was the site of a cemetery, and would abandon the hunt when they found the bones. But if they were, as was probable, superstitious, the finding of bones in wildly picturesque recesses of jungly forests would set them into flight away from the devils who guard hidden treasures.

Monte Alban, near Oaxaca, Mexico, is another of the pre-Aztec ruins which, if Don Alfonso Caso be believed, hides "millions of jewels and gold." In January 1932 there reached me reports that the Bank of Mexico had received into its vaults an immense treasure found in a mound on this hill. Some weeks beforehand the diggers were excited to find a stairway going down many feet deep into the hill. The stairway was one hundred and fifty feet wide. At the bottom gaped a great

tomb. The men worked sixteen hours a day, feverishly shovelling away the accumulated rubbish of some five hundred years or more. They came on a flat carved tablet in the ceiling, which proved to be not a door, but an exit by which the old builders had emerged after sealing the doorway from inside. In the tomb were found ten mummies whose crania were encrusted with turquoise, and by their sides a finely wrought mask of gold and a human skull transfixed by a stone knife. Around lay heaps of cups, urns, jars of onyx, jade, rock crystal, and gold ornaments and utensils encrusted with gems.

The author of this book was, some years ago, confided in by an old but picturesque Englishman who desired to form an air survey company to operate in Mexico with the aid of a number of freight air-liners of the most modern type. The equipment was to include full commissariat and hospital facilities, and the purposes was nominally to carry Mexican passengers and freight, but actually to spy out the land where the old gentleman believed treasures of rich value were hidden. Of course the Mexican authorities and landowners would have received their full pound of flesh, but the old Englishman was very anxious that no word of treasure-hunting should leak out into native ears. A steam or motor yacht was to be attached to the survey, and while the vessel was in Vera Cruz harbour preliminary air surveys would be made of treasure sites in the states of Vera Cruz, Oaxaca, Mexico, and Puebla. Another air survey would be made of southern Mexico, especially of a region where he presumed was the site of a large prehistoric city, rich in Aztec gold mines and "fabulous Aztec treasures." The air survey having been made, the ship would steam up the nearest river to make a ground survey and secure a proportion of the treasure.

He spoke of other caches, tapping me confidentially in the middle of the waistcoat :

"I know of large treasures in Panama. Then, in Peru, are rich goldfields, but a long flight would be needed. Paraguay has a very large hidden treasure, but a long flight and very dangerous. In the Argentine republic is the cordillera of C——, where I know of a very rich treasure and gold placer mine. East, some way, is an old Spanish gold-mine and buried treasure, and, if we like, these three points can be tackled by going up the Rio Plata from Buenos Ayres, but the air route offers better prospects in exploring unknown territory. . . . Yes, the whole Cordillera de los Andes would be well worth an aerial survey."

I gasped at the magnificent *insouciance* of this suggestion, which reminded me of the proposal of another gentleman that Cocos Island should be explored by airplane—that island on end—no account being taken in the case of the Andes of the difficulties of super-charged engines, ascending currents against mountain walls, and lack of landing-places in rarefied air regions!

The old gentleman said Lobos, on the east coast of Mexico, had a rich treasure cache, while to the west, there was a tradition that on one of the Miguel Islands, off the coast of California, there had been buried in the eighteenth century a great number of Mexican gold doubloons, taken from the wreck of a Spanish ship. Many of the islands in the Gulf of Mexico have traditions of rich pirate treasures, hidden and never found. One such eerie island, alleged to be haunted by the ghosts of Mexican pirates and of a singing Spanish lady (murdered by an infamous pirate), was some years back the home of a queer Timon of Athens, a hermit who had a mortal hatred of American sailormen. On this island are said to have been hidden nine separate hoards, the clues to whose locations are given on the lopped-off branches of an amazing tree of great age and unknown origin, since it is not an indigenous species. Nine of the trunks have been lopped so as to point in nine different directions towards presumed caches. Whoever once lived on this eerie island, which is now half under sea, constructed a sea-wall, and even went to the trouble to make a stone chart of the outline of the island, which was done by sticking hundreds of stones on end on the ground. The alleged phenomena of clanging chains, screams, and shouts, banging doors, followed by beautiful singing in a woman's Spanish voice to sounds of a banjo, are said to be heard an hour or two after sub-tropic sundown, when they seem to come from *underground*! (One is irresistibly reminded of Archbishop Laud's ghost walking with cut-off knees on a floor of a college-room which would now, did it exist, be below street-level at Oxford!)

Old Timon—he is probably dead by now—connected the caches with Captain Jose Gaspar, or Gasparilla, an officer of high rank in the Spanish navy, who, about 1785, turned pirate. On Gasparilla Island he set up as king of the pirates, surrounded by a harem of lovely ladies selected from ships he captured. All males were killed, not even a eunuch being saved alive. Somewhere around 1802 Gasparilla captured a large Spanish ship in the gulf, looted her gold, and took off

with him to the island, a Spanish princess, Josefa, and eleven Mexican ladies of honour. The eleven girls were shared out among the hairy crew, but the pirate chief kept the princess for himself. However, as she would have nothing to do with him, he murdered her. It is, of course, her beauteous ghost which sings those ravishing Spanish songs in the witching night. Gasparillo met his Waterloo in 1821, when Commodore Porter was rounding up West Indian pirates around Cuba and Florida. One day, a large ship flying British colours sailed into the island's harbour, and when Gasparilla sailed out to attack her he met a Tartar in the shape of a well-armed frigate of Uncle Sam's navy. The story is that Gasparilla, twisting a bight of the anchor chain round his waist, jumped overboard and went to Davy Jones's locker.

Whether this eerie island is still above the sea, I know not, nor would I recommend any treasure-hunters to sail after its hoards lest they meet an anti-climax akin to that which was the fate of a landing-party from the French cruiser *Jeanne d'Arc*, in May 1933, which, amid gun salutes and the *Marseillaise* from the ship's band, landed on Clipperton Island, nine hundred miles off the Mexican coast, to find that some wily Mejicanos had removed all the available treasure from this island, in the form of foul and stinking but valuable guano. For of such bathos is the life of the treasure-hunter, and his little days are oft rounded with a sudden sleep.

Navvies, engaged on road-making in Mexico, have a number of recent finds of treasure to their credit. For example, in January 1930, a man working with pick and shovel on the road from Vera Cruz to Cordoba hit two urns stuffed with gold of Aztec origin, which gold he stuffed into his breeches pocket and made off at speed down the road, leaving his mates to quarrel over the residuum of bones and ancient pottery. We do not know what happened to this absconder, although we do know, from personal experience, that the Mexican authorities have painfully drastic ways of enforcing state rights in treasure trove. In September 1933, navvies making a road from Mexico City to the old silver mines of Pachuca, turned up on the ends of their picks no fewer than six coffers, rusted with the decay of many years, and containing no less than £50,000 worth of gold and silver plate, and gold coins dating back to 1780 and on to about 1830. Whether a bandit hoard or a looted state treasury was found is not known, but the Federal Government took one-half of the money and rewarded the navvies and their employers with about £1,000 each.



Seven brothers in Mexico City have, a Mexican friend tells me, recently formed themselves into a society to hunt for buried bandit gold. An aged Indian directed them to a hill in the state of Guanajuato, where they dug up two yellowed papers giving clues to hoards buried by seven bandits in 1780, who later disappeared into the Hades of thieves. One paper is the cryptographic key ; the other, in Spanish, tells why the hoards were hidden.

# WHEN JELlicoe ESCAPED DROWNING

By

J. G. LOCKHART

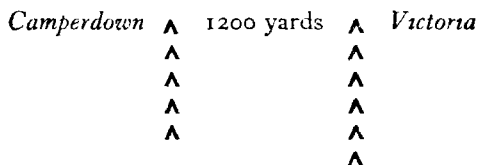
ON Thursday, 22nd June 1893, the London season was at its height. A great deal was happening. Night after night in the House of Commons, before crowded galleries, Gladstone and Chamberlain were fighting each other through the financial clauses of the second Home Rule Bill. On 16th February, His Royal Highness the Duke of York was to marry the Princess Victoria Mary of Teck, and London was buzzing with the excitement of a royal wedding. The Australians had come over to snatch the Ashes ; (on Thursday they were destroying Kent at Gravesend). You might go to see Mr. George Alexander make a great hit in Pinero's new piece, *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* ; or, if your tastes were more classical, you might visit the Lyceum, where Mr. Henry Irving was playing Shylock to Miss Ellen Terry's Portia. There were the usual dinners, dances, receptions ; and, it may be remembered, on that Thursday evening Lady Tryon, wife of Sir George Tryon, K.C.B., Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean squadron, was At Home in her house at Eaton Place to some two hundred guests. Afterwards a curious tale was whispered (though never confirmed) about her party. One or two of the guests, it was said, had seen enter the drawing-room and pass through it the familiar figure of the hostess's husband, the Admiral. Of course, it was impossible. All the world knew that the Admiral was with his squadron in Mediterranean waters, whence Lady Tryon had arrived only three weeks before. Still, that was the story, and it is probably quite untrue.

While London was dining and dancing its way through that June night, already a dreadful thing had happened. The first rumours of it arrived early on Friday morning with a cable

from the British Consul at Tripoli in Syria ; and by eleven o'clock, when an official wire reached the Admiralty, the news had become pretty widely known in certain well-informed circles. The *Victoria*, the flagship of Admiral Sir George Tryon, while manœuvring off the coast of Syria the previous afternoon, had collided with another battleship, the *Camperdown*, and had sunk with fearful loss of life. The latter reports only served to confirm the news. There had been some strange, inexplicable disaster, in which the *Victoria* had gone to the bottom, and with her the Admiral, twenty-two officers, and three hundred and thirty-seven men had perished.

Although during the weeks that followed, and particularly from the proceedings of the inevitable Court Martial, it became clear how the accident had happened, why it happened remained, and still remains, something of a mystery.

Yet there is plenty of evidence for the principal facts. On Thursday, 22nd June, the British Mediterranean squadron, under the command of Vice-Admiral Sir George Tryon, left Beyrout for Tripoli. Shortly before the disaster took place the squadron, which consisted of eleven battleships, was steaming at about eight knots in the formation known as line abreast. Before making the evening anchorage the Admiral proposed to carry out certain manœuvres. First of all the formation was changed into two columns, line ahead. At this point the position of the various ships is clear from the following diagram.



It will thus be seen that the *Camperdown*, commanded by Admiral Markham, was leading the port column, and Admiral Tryon's flagship, the *Victoria*, the starboard column ; and that between the two columns there was a distance of six cables, or 1200 yards. The Admiral then gave a very peculiar order. He signalled that when the squadron had passed the spot where he proposed anchoring, the course was to be reversed by the two lines turning inwards in succession (like partners in a country dance). In this way the relative formation would be maintained when the squadron returned to its anchorage.

Provided the distance between the two columns was sufficient, the manœuvre, though unusual, was perfectly feasible. On the other hand, if there was not enough distance, it is obvious, even to the lay mind, that a collision was inevitable.

When the order was given the two columns, as we have seen, were six cables, or 1200 yards apart. The smallest turning circles of both the *Victoria* and the *Camperdown* were 600 yards; but their normal turning circles must have been nearer 800. When therefore the two ships turned in towards each other, it was clear that a point would be reached when the circles, under the most favourable circumstances, would meet, and more probably would intersect. In other words, assuming that the manœuvre was carried out, as it was meant to be carried out, practically simultaneously by both ships, nothing could prevent a collision at the point of contact or intersection.

Although the attention of Admiral Tryon was thrice drawn to the undue proximity of the *Victoria* and the *Camperdown*, he persisted in his intention and flew the following signal:

“Second division alter course in succession sixteen points to starboard, preserving the order of the fleet; and the first division alter course in succession sixteen points to port, preserving the order of the fleet.”

In the *Camperdown* Admiral Markham and Captain Johnstone were quite at a loss to interpret the order.

“It is impossible,” exclaimed the Admiral to his flag-lieutenant. “It is an impracticable manœuvre.”

As the *Camperdown* hesitated to acknowledge the order, Admiral Tryon signalled, “What are you waiting for?” In his doubt Markham signalled back that the order was not understood. He then consulted again with his Captain, and together they came to the conclusion that the manœuvre must be attempted.

“We have got to do it,” said Markham.

Probably, they reasoned, the Commander-in-Chief had some plan which was not yet apparent. He was a skilful and experienced tactician, and it was unthinkable that he was intending to carry out an evolution which must end in a collision. Afterwards Markham stated that he thought Tryon might be meaning to circle round his division, although the message certainly did not suggest such an interpretation. At any rate the *Camperdown* signalled back that the order was understood, and the two leaders began to turn inwards.

As for the other ships in the squadron, their commanders seem to have been equally puzzled by the manœuvre ; but since they were not required to carry it out until the *Victoria* and the *Camperdown* had set them the example, they were content to acknowledge the order and see what happened.

What followed on board the flagship is best described by the Captain, the Honourable Maurice Bourke, in the evidence which he gave at the Court Martial.

" Directly the signal came down and the helm was put over, the ship having swung about two points with the helm extreme, I said to the Admiral, ' We shall be very close to that ship,' meaning the *Camperdown*. I then turned to Mr. Lanyon, midshipman, who was my aide-de-camp, and told him to take the distance to the *Camperdown*. To the best of my recollection, when I spoke to the Admiral he looked aft, but made no answer at all. After I spoke to Mr. Lanyon I again said, ' We had better do something. We shall be very close to the *Camperdown*.' All this time we were turning. I then said to the Admiral, receiving no answer, ' May I go astern full speed with the port screw ? ' I asked this question to the best of my belief twice or three times quickly, one after the other. At last he said, ' Yes.' The port telegraph was immediately put full speed, and, without further orders, very shortly after I ordered both screws to be put full speed astern."

In the *Camperdown* the same orders had been given and carried out. But it was too late. Slowly, inexorably, the two great ships drew near to each other ; and within three and a half to four minutes of the beginning of the manœuvre they met in a terrible impact. The *Camperdown* crashed into the bows of the *Victoria*, rending and grinding through the flagship's protective armour. Below the water-line she worked an even more fatal mischief ; for her great steel ram ripped its way into the other ship, much as the tusk of an elephant tears out the vitals of its victim. A petty officer of the *Victoria*, standing in his mess, saw the ram of the *Camperdown* suddenly burst through with a cloud of dust from the shattered coal-bunkers.

In the other vessels of the squadron men looked on in impotent horror. They heard the crash of the collision ; and they saw the two ships shiver as they locked together, and then draw slowly apart like wounded leviathans. By the force of the impact the *Victoria* was heaved sideways bodily for a distance of seventy feet ; and as she fell away from the *Camperdown*, she began to heel over to starboard. She had been mortally wounded.

Yet on board the most perfect discipline prevailed. The sick were brought up on deck, the prisoners were released from the guard-room, and the crews were ordered to quarters. The men moved as on parade, and carried out their orders or stood in their ranks in absolute silence. Some of them were told off to place a collision mat over the gaping wound in the bows, and continued at their hopeless task until the water was up to their waists. They were then recalled and fell in with the others.

Admiral Tryon, his staff-commander, his flag-lieutenant, and a midshipman were standing on the chart-house.

"It is all my fault," said the Admiral sadly, as the ship began to heel over, and he looked down on the waiting ranks of his men.

When the collision took place, the other ships in the squadron had at once made ready to launch their boats. But presently the flagship signalled, "Annul sending boats." It is believed that the Admiral then intended to steam towards the shore, which was not very far away; but the end was too near.

Some ten minutes after the collision the Admiral turned to his staff-commander and said, "I think she's going."

"Yes, sir, I think she is," was the reply.

The Admiral then signalled, "Send boats immediately," and noticing that the midshipman was still standing by his side, he said: "Don't stop there, youngster, go to a boat." But the boy stayed, and went down with his Chief.

The men had fallen in with their backs to the bulwarks, but on the order "Right about turn" they turned and faced the sea. Not a man broke the ranks or tried to jump; near as was the end, the discipline held.

So the *Victoria* began to go down, turning slowly right over as she did so. An officer shouted to the men to jump, and they rushed in swarms up the sloping deck, and tried to struggle through the ports. Many of them succeeded in climbing through, and were actually seen clambering along the ship's bottom. Admiral Tryon, who had been last observed refusing the lifebelt which his staff-commander brought him, went down with the ship.

It was a ghastly scene. Owing, perhaps, to the attempt which had been made to steam for the shore, the engines were kept working until the ship sank; so that the engine and furnace-rooms were full of men who were trapped and died at their posts. Probably their death was mercifully

swift. Moreover, as the ship turned over, the racing screws were forced above the surface, catching and mangling many unfortunate men. Like some huge guillotine, the blades whirled round, shearing off heads and arms and legs ; so that, to crown the horror of the sinking, the surrounding sea became red with blood. The *Victoria* continued to heel as she went down, until the water rushed in at the funnels and reached the fires. There was a loud explosion, and with screws still racing furiously the battleship disappeared in a foaming swirl. The sea raced furiously for a few moments round the spot where she had sunk, the surface was dotted with the heads of struggling men, and from the depths came two muffled reports as the boilers burst.

Nearly three hundred men were picked up by the boats which hurried to the spot. 'Among these, it is now interesting to recall, was the young commander of the *Victoria*, John Jellicoe, who, when the accident happened, was lying in his bunk, sick with fever. He rushed up on deck in his pyjamas, managed to secure a lifebelt, and was eventually taken into one of the boats. Twenty-one years later he was to become Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet in the Great War.

The Court Martial on the collision and the loss of the *Victoria* was held at Malta, and opened on 17th July, under the presidency of Admiral Sir Michael Culme-Seymour. After sitting for ten days and taking a good deal of evidence, the Court found that the disaster had been caused by the order of the Commander-in-Chief, Vice-Admiral 'Tryon ; that everything possible had been done to save the ship and the lives of the men in her ; and that no blame attached to Captain Bourke. The Court also expressed its regret that Admiral Markham had not protested more strongly against the fatal manœuvre, but considered that it was not in the best interests of the Service to censure him for obeying the orders of his superior officer

# ADrift IN AN OPEN BOAT

By

SIR JOHN BARROW

*In 1787 an expedition was sent out by George III to Tahiti to collect plants of the bread fruit that they might be introduced in the West Indies. This expedition set sail in the Bounty commanded by Lieutenant Bligh with a crew of forty-three and two botanists. After a successful stay at Tahiti, the ship sailed again, but in the region of the Friendly Isles mutiny broke out headed by Fletcher Christian, the mate, and Bligh and eighteen men who stood by him were cast adrift in the launch. The story of their adventures is told here by Sir John Barrow, whose account of these events was published in 1831.*

CHRISTIAN had intended to send away his captain and associates in the cutter, and ordered that it should be hoisted out for that purpose, which was done—a small wretched boat, that could hold but eight or ten men at the most, with a very small additional weight. But the remonstrances of the master, boatswain, and carpenter, prevailed on him to let those unfortunate men have the launch, into which nineteen persons were thrust, whose weight, together with that of the few articles they were permitted to take, brought down the boat so near to the water, as to endanger her sinking with but a moderate swell of the sea—and to all human appearance, in no state to survive the length of voyage they were destined to perform over the wide ocean, but which they did most miraculously survive.

The first consideration of Lieutenant Bligh and his eighteen unfortunate companions, on being cast adrift in their open boat, was to examine the state of their resources. The quantity of provisions which they found to have been thrown



into the boat, by some few kind-hearted messmates, amounted to one hundred and fifty pounds of bread, sixteen pieces of pork, each weighing two pounds, six quarts of rum, six bottles of wine, with twenty-eight gallons of water, and four empty barricoes. Being so near to the island of Tofoa, it was resolved to seek there a supply of bread-fruit and water, to preserve if possible the above-mentioned stock entire; but after rowing along the coast, they discovered only some coco-nut trees on the top of high precipices, from which, with much danger owing to the surf, and great difficulty in climbing the cliffs, they succeeded in obtaining about twenty nuts. The second day they made excursions into the island, but without success. They met, however, with a few natives, who came down with them to the cove where the boat was lying; and others presently followed. They made inquiries after the ship, and Bligh unfortunately advised they should say that the ship had overset and sunk, and that they only were saved. The story might be innocent, but it was certainly indiscreet to put the people in possession of their defenceless situation; however, they brought in small quantities of bread-fruit, plantains, and coco-nuts, but little or no water could be procured. These supplies, scanty as they were, served to keep up the spirits of the men: "They no longer," says Bligh, "regarded me with those anxious looks, which had constantly been directed towards me, since we lost sight of the ship: every countenance appeared to have a degree of cheerfulness, and they all seemed determined to do their best."

The numbers of the natives having so much increased as to line the whole beach, they began knocking stones together, which was known to be the preparatory signal for an attack. With some difficulty on account of the surf, our seamen succeeded in getting the things that were on shore into the boat, together with all the men, except John Norton, quartermaster, who was casting off the stern-fast. The natives immediately rushed upon this poor man, and actually stoned him to death. A volley of stones was also discharged at the boat, and every one in it was more or less hurt. This induced the people to push out to sea with all the speed they were able to give to the launch, but to their surprise and alarm, several canoes, filled with stones, followed close after them and renewed the attack; against which, the only return the unfortunate men in the boat could make, was with the stones of the assailants that lodged in her, a species of warfare in which



*The natives rushed on this man and stoned him to death.*



they were very inferior to the Indians. The only expedient left was to tempt the enemy to desist from the pursuit, by throwing overboard some clothes, which fortunately induced the canoes to stop and pick them up ; and night coming on, they returned to the shore, leaving the party in the boat to reflect on their unhappy situation.

The men now entreated their commander to take them towards home ; and on being told that no hope of relief could be entertained till they reached Timor, a distance of full twelve hundred leagues, they all readily agreed to be content with an allowance, which, on calculation of their resources, the commander informed them would not exceed one ounce of bread, and a quarter of a pint of water, per day. Recommending them, therefore, in the most solemn manner, not to depart from their promise in this respect, " we bore away," says Bligh, " across a sea where the navigation is but little known, in a small boat twenty-three feet long from stem to stern, deeply laden with eighteen men. I was happy, however, to see that every one seemed better satisfied with our situation than myself. It was about eight o'clock at night on the 2nd May, when we bore away under a reefed lug-foresail ; and having divided the people into watches, and got the boat into a little order, we returned thanks to God for our miraculous preservation, and, in full confidence of His gracious support, I found my mind more at ease than it had been for some time past."

At daybreak on the 3rd, the forlorn and almost hopeless navigators saw with alarm the sun to rise fiery and red—a sure indication of a severe gale of wind ; and accordingly, at eight o'clock it blew a violent storm, and the sea ran so very high, that the sail was becalmed when between the seas, and too much to have set when on the top of the sea ; yet it is stated that they could not venture to take it in, as they were in very imminent danger and distress, the sea curling over the stern of the boat, and obliging them to bale with all their might. " A situation," observes the commander, " more distressing has, perhaps, seldom been experienced."

The bread, being in bags, was in the greatest danger of being spoiled by the wet, the consequence of which, if not prevented, must have been fatal, as the whole party would inevitably be starved to death, if they should fortunately escape the fury of the waves. It was determined, therefore, that all superfluous clothes, with some rope and spare sails, should be thrown overboard, by which the boat was con-

siderably lightened. The carpenter's tool-chest was cleared, and the tools stowed in the bottom of the boat, and the bread secured in the chest. All the people being thoroughly wet and cold, a teaspoonful of rum was served out to each person, with a quarter of a bread-fruit, which is stated to have been scarcely eatable, for dinner; Bligh having determined to preserve sacredly, and at the peril of his life, the engagement they entered into, and to make their small stock of provisions last eight weeks, let the daily proportion be ever so small.

The sea continuing to run even higher than in the morning, the fatigue of baling became very great; the boat was necessarily kept before the sea. The men were constantly wet, the night very cold, and at daylight their limbs were so benumbed, that they could scarcely find the use of them. At this time a teaspoonful of rum served out to each person was found of great benefit to all. Five small coco-nuts were distributed for dinner, and every one was satisfied; and in the evening, a few broken pieces of bread-fruit were served for supper, after which prayers were performed.

On the night of the 4th and morning of the 5th, the gale had abated; the first step to be taken was to examine the state of the bread, a great part of which was found to be damaged and rotten—but even this was carefully preserved for use. The boat was now running among some islands, but after their reception at Tofoa, they did not venture to land. On the 6th, they still continued to see islands at a distance; and this day, for the first time, they hooked a fish, to their great joy; “but,” says the commander, “we were miserably disappointed by its being lost in trying to get it into the boat. In the evening, each person had an ounce of the damaged bread, and a quarter of a pint of water for supper.

Lieutenant Bligh observes, “It will readily be supposed our lodgings were very miserable, and confined for want of room”; but he endeavoured to remedy the latter defect, by putting themselves at watch and watch; so that one half always sat up, while the other lay down on the boat's bottom, or upon a chest, but with nothing to cover them except the heavens. Their limbs, he says, were dreadfully cramped, for they could not stretch them out; and the nights were so cold, and they were so constantly wet, that, after a few hours' sleep, they were scarcely able to move. At dawn of day on the 7th, being very wet and cold, he says, “I served a spoonful of rum and a morsel of bread for breakfast.”

In the course of this day they passed close to some rocky

isles, from which two large sailing-canoes came swiftly after them, but in the afternoon gave over the chase. They were of the same construction as those of the Friendly Islands, and the land seen for the last two days was supposed to be the Fejee Islands. But being constantly wet, Bligh says, "it is with the utmost difficulty I can open a book to write, and I feel truly sensible I can do no more than point out where these lands are to be found, and give some idea of their extent." Heavy rain came on in the afternoon, when every person in the boat did his utmost to catch some water, and thus succeeded in increasing their stock to thirty-four gallons, besides quenching their thirst for the first time they had been able to do so since they had been at sea : but it seems an attendant consequence of the heavy rain caused them to pass the night very miserably ; for being extremely wet, and having no dry things to shift or cover themselves, they experienced cold and shiverings scarcely to be conceived.

On the 8th, the allowance issued was an ounce and a half of pork, a teaspoonful of rum, half a pint of coco-nut milk, and an ounce of bread. The rum, though so small in quantity, is stated to have been of the greatest service. In the afternoon they were employed in cleaning out the boat, which occupied them until sunset before they got everything dry and in order. "Hitherto," Bligh says, "I had issued the allowance by guess, but I now made a pair of scales with two coco-nut shells ; and having accidentally some pistol-balls in the boat, twenty-five of which weighed one pound or sixteen ounces, I adopted one of these balls as the proportion of weight that each person should receive of bread at the times I served it. I also amused all hands with describing the situations of New Guinea and New Holland, and gave them every information in my power that in case any accident should happen to me, those who survived might have some idea of what they were about, and be able to find their way to Timor, which at present they knew nothing of more than the name, and some not even that. At night I served a quarter of a pint of water and half an ounce of bread for supper.

On the morning of the 9th, a quarter of a pint of coco-nut milk and some of the decayed bread were served for breakfast ; and for dinner, the kernels of four coco-nuts, with the remainder of the rotten bread, which, he says, was eatable only by such distressed people as themselves. A storm of thunder and lightning gave them about twenty gallons of water. "Being miserably wet and cold, I served to the people a teaspoonful

of rum each, to enable them to bear with their distressing situation. The weather continued extremely bad, and the wind increased; we spent a very miserable night, without sleep, except such as could be got in the midst of rain."

The following day, the 10th, brought no relief, except that of its light. The sea broke over the boat so much that two men were kept constantly baling; and it was necessary to keep the boat before the waves for fear of its filling. The allowance now served regularly to each person was one twenty-fifth part of a pound of bread and a quarter of a pint of water, at eight in the morning, at noon, and at sunset. To-day was added about half an ounce of pork for dinner, which, though any moderate person would have considered only as a mouthful, was divided into three or four.

The morning of the 11th did not improve. "At day-break I served to every person a teaspoonful of rum, our limbs being so much cramped that we could scarcely move them. Our situation was now extremely dangerous, the sea frequently running over our stern, which kept us baling with all our strength. At noon the sun appeared, which gave us as much pleasure as is felt when it shows itself on a winter's day in England.

"In the evening of the 12th it still rained hard, and we again experienced a dreadful night. At length the day came, and showed a miserable set of beings, full of wants, without anything to relieve them. Some complained of great pain in their bowels, and every one of having almost lost the use of his limbs. The little sleep we got was in no way refreshing, as we were constantly covered with the sea and rain. The weather continuing, and no sun affording the least prospect of getting our clothes dried, I recommended to every one to strip and wring them through the sea-water, by which means they received a warmth that, while wet with rain-water, they could not have." The shipping of seas and constant baling continued; and though the men were shivering with wet and cold, the commander was under the necessity of informing them that he could no longer afford them the comfort they had derived from the teaspoonful of rum.

On the 13th and 14th the stormy weather and heavy sea continued unabated, and on these days they saw distant land, and passed several islands. The sight of these islands, it may well be supposed, served only to increase the misery of their situation. They were as men very little better than starving, with plenty in their view; yet, to attempt procuring

any relief was considered to be attended with so much danger, that the prolongation of life, even in the midst of misery, was thought preferable, while there remained hopes of being able to surmount their hardships.

The whole day and night of the 15th were still rainy ; the latter was dark, not a star to be seen by which the steerage could be directed, and the sea was continually breaking over the boat. On the next day, the 16th, was issued for dinner an ounce of salt pork, in addition to their miserable allowance of one twenty-fifth part of a pound of bread. The night was again truly horrible, with storms of thunder, lightning, and rain ; not a star visible, so that the steerage was quite uncertain

On the morning of the 17th, at dawn of day, " I found," says the commander, " every person complaining, and some of them solicited extra allowance, which I positively refused. Our situation was miserable ; always wet, and suffering extreme cold in the night, without the least shelter from the weather. The little rum we had was of the greatest service : when our nights were particularly distressing, I generally served a teaspoonful or two to each person, and it was always joyful tidings when they heard of my intentions. The night was again a dark and dismal one, the sea constantly breaking over us, and nothing but the wind and waves to direct our steerage. It was my intention, if possible, to make the coast of New Holland to the southward of Endeavour Straits, being sensible that it was necessary to preserve such a situation as would make a southerly wind a fair one ; that we might range along the reefs till an opening should be found into smooth water, and we the sooner be able to pick up some refreshments."

On the 18th the rain abated, when, at their commander's recommendation, they all stripped and wrung their clothes through the sea-water, from which, as usual, they derived much warmth and refreshment ; but every one complained of violent pains in their bones. At night the heavy rain recommenced, with severe lightning, which obliged them to keep baling without intermission. The same weather continued through the 19th and 20th ; the rain constant—at times a deluge—the men always baling ; the commander, too, found it necessary to issue for dinner only half an ounce of pork.

At dawn of day, Lieutenant Bligh states, that some of his people seemed half dead ; that their appearances were horrible, " and I could look," says he, " no way, but I caught the eye of some one in distress. Extreme hunger was now too



evident, but no one suffered from thirst, nor had we much inclination to drink, that desire perhaps being satisfied through the skin. The little sleep we got was in the midst of water, and we constantly awoke with severe cramps and pains in our bones. At noon the sun broke out and revived every one.

"During the whole of the afternoon of the 21st we were so covered with rain and salt water, that we could scarcely see. We suffered extreme cold, and every one dreaded the approach of night. Sleep, though we longed for it, afforded no comfort; for my own part, I almost lived without it. On the 22nd, our situation was extremely calamitous. We were obliged to take the course of the sea, running right before it, and watching with the utmost care, as the least error in the helm would in a moment have been our destruction. It continued through the day to blow hard, and the foam of the sea kept running over our stern and quarters.

"The misery we suffered this night exceeded the preceding. The sea flew over us with great force, and kept us baling with horror and anxiety. At dawn of day I found every one in a most distressed condition, and I began to fear that another such night would put an end to the lives of several, who seemed no longer able to support their sufferings. I served an allowance of *two* teaspoonfuls of rum; after drinking which, and having wrung our clothes and taken our breakfast of bread and water, we became a little refreshed.

"On the evening of the 24th, the wind moderated and the weather looked much better, which rejoiced all hands, so that they ate their scanty allowance with more satisfaction than for some time past. The night also was fair; but being always wet with the sea, we suffered much from the cold. I had the pleasure to see a fine morning produce some cheerful countenances; and for the first time, during the last fifteen days, we experienced comfort from the warmth of the sun. We stripped and hung up our clothes to dry, which were by this time become so threadbare, that they could not keep out either wet or cold. In the afternoon we had many birds about us, which are never seen far from land, such as boobies and noddies."

As the sea now began to run fair, and the boat shipped but little water, Lieutenant Bligh took the opportunity to examine into the state of their bread; and it was found that, according to the present mode of living, there was a sufficient quantity remaining for twenty-nine days' allowance, by which time there was every reason to expect they would be able to

reach Timor. But as this was still uncertain, and it was possible that, after all, they might be obliged to go to Java, it was determined to proportion the allowance, so as to make the stock hold out six weeks. "I was apprehensive," he says, "that this would be ill received, and that it would require my utmost resolution to enforce it; for, small as the quantity was which I intended to take away for our future good, yet it might appear to my people like robbing them of life; and some who were less patient than their companions, I expected would very ill brook it. However, on my representing the necessity of guarding against delays that might be occasioned by contrary winds, or other causes, and promising to enlarge upon the allowance as we got on, they cheerfully agreed to my proposal." It was accordingly settled that every person should receive one twenty-fifth part of a pound of bread for breakfast, and the same quantity for dinner as usual, but that the proportion for supper should be discontinued; this arrangement left them forty-three days' consumption.

On the 25th, about noon, some noddies came so near to the boat, that one of them was caught by hand. This bird was about the size of a small pigeon. "I divided it," says Bligh, "with its entrails, into eighteen portions, and by a well-known method at sea, of "*Who shall have this?*" it was distributed, with the allowance of bread and water for dinner, and eaten up, bones and all, with salt water for sauce. In the evening, several boobies flying very near to us, we had the good fortune to catch one of them. This bird is as large as a duck. They are the most presumptive proof of being near land, of any sea-fowl we are acquainted with. I directed the bird to be killed for supper, and the blood to be given to three of the people who were the most distressed for want of food. The body, with the entrails, beak, and feet, I divided into eighteen shares, and with the allowance of bread, which I made a merit of granting, we made a good supper compared with our usual fare.

"On the next day, the 26th, we caught another booby, so that Providence appeared to be relieving our wants in an extraordinary manner. The people were overjoyed at this addition to their dinner, which was distributed in the same manner as on the preceding evening; giving the blood to those who were the most in want of food. To make the bread a little savoury, most of the men frequently dipped it in salt water, but I generally broke mine into small pieces, and ate it in my allowance of water, out of a coco-nut shell, with a

spoon ; economically avoiding to take too large a piece at a time, so that I was as long at dinner as if it had been a much more plentiful meal."

The weather was now serene, which, nevertheless, was not without its inconveniences, for, it appears, they began to feel distress of a different kind from that which they had hitherto been accustomed to suffer. The heat of the sun was now so powerful, that several of the people were seized with a languor and faintness, which made life indifferent. But the little circumstance of catching two boobies in the evening, trifling as it may appear, had the effect of raising their spirits. The stomachs of these birds contained several flying-fish, and small cuttle-fish, all of which were carefully saved to be divided for dinner the next day ; which were accordingly divided with their entrails, and the contents of their maws, into eighteen portions, and, as the prize was a very valuable one, it was distributed as before, by calling out, "*Who shall have this ?*"—"so that to-day," says the Lieutenant, "with the usual allowance of bread at breakfast and at dinner, I was happy to see that every person thought he had feasted." From the appearance of the clouds in the evening, Mr. Bligh had no doubt they were then near the land, and the people amused themselves with conversing on the probability of what they would meet with on it.

Accordingly, at one in the morning of the 28th, the person at the helm heard the sound of breakers. It was the "barrier reef" which runs along the eastern coast of New Holland, through which it now became the anxious object to discover a passage ; Mr. Bligh says this was now become absolutely necessary, without a moment's loss of time. The idea of getting into smooth water and finding refreshments kept up the people's spirits. The sea broke furiously over the reef in every part ; within, the water was so smooth and calm, that every man already anticipated the heartfelt satisfaction he was about to receive, as soon as he should have passed the barrier. At length a break in the reef was discovered, a quarter of a mile in width, and through this the boat rapidly passed with a strong stream running to the westward, and came immediately into smooth water, and all the past hardships seemed at once to be forgotten.

They now returned thanks to God for His generous protection, and with much content took their miserable allowance of the twenty-fifth part of a pound of bread, and a quarter of a pint of water, for dinner.

The coast now began to show itself very distinctly, and in the evening they landed on the sandy point of an island, when it was soon discovered there were oysters on the rocks, it being low water. The party sent out to reconnoitre returned highly rejoiced at having found plenty of oysters and fresh water. By help of a small magnifying glass a fire was made, and among the things that had been thrown into the boat was a tinder-box and a piece of brimstone, so that in future they had the ready means of making a fire. One of the men too had been so provident as to bring away with him from the ship a copper pot ; and thus, with a mixture of oysters, bread, and pork, a stew was made, of which each person received a full pint. It is remarked that the oysters grew so fast to the rocks, that it was with great difficulty they could be broken off ; but they at length discovered it to be the most expeditious way to open them where they were fixed.

The general complaints among the people were a dizziness in the head, great weakness in the joints, and violent tenesmus, but none of them are stated to have been alarming ; and notwithstanding their sufferings from cold and hunger, all of them retained marks of strength. Mr. Bligh had cautioned them not to touch any kind of berry or fruit that they might find ; yet it appears they were no sooner out of sight, than they began to make free with three different kinds that grew all over the island, eating without any reserve. The symptoms of having eaten too much began at last to frighten some of them ; they fancied they were all poisoned, and regarded each other with the strongest marks of apprehension, uncertain what might be the issue of their imprudence : fortunately the fruit proved to be wholesome and good.

"This day (29th May) being," says Lieutenant Bligh, "the anniversary of the restoration of King Charles II, and the name not being inapplicable to our present situation (for we were *restored* to fresh life and strength), I named this 'Restoration Island' ; for I thought it probable that Captain Cook might not have taken notice of it."

With oysters and palm-tops stewed together the people now made excellent meals, without consuming any of their bread. In the morning of the 30th, Mr. Bligh saw with great delight a visible alteration in the men for the better, and he sent them away to gather oysters, in order to carry a stock of them to sea, for he determined to put off again that evening. They also procured fresh water, and filled all their vessels to the amount of nearly sixty gallons. On examining the bread,

it was found there still remained about thirty-eight days' allowance.

Being now ready for sea, every person was ordered to attend prayers; but just as they were embarking, about twenty naked savages made their appearance, running and hallooing, and beckoning the strangers to come to them; but, as each was armed with a spear or lance, it was thought prudent to hold no communication with them. They now proceeded to the northward, having the continent on their left, and several islands and reefs on their right.

On the 31st they landed on one of these islands, to which was given the name of "Sunday." "I sent out two parties (says Bligh), one to the northward and the other to the southward, to seek for supplies, and others I ordered to stay by the boat. On this occasion, fatigue and weakness so far got the better of their sense of duty, that some of the people expressed their discontent at having worked harder than their companions, and declared that they would rather be without their dinner than go in search of it. One person, in particular, went so far as to tell me, with a mutinous look, that he was as good a man as myself. It was not possible for one to judge where this might have an end, if not stopped in time; to prevent therefore such disputes in future, I determined either to preserve my command or die in the attempt; and seizing a cutlass, I ordered him to lay hold of another and defend himself; on which he called out that I was going to kill him, and immediately made concessions. I did not allow this to interfere further with the harmony of the boat's crew, and everything soon became quiet."

On this island they obtained oysters, and clams, and dog-fish; also a small bean, which Nelson, the botanist, pronounced to be a species of *dolichos*. On the 1st of June, they stopped in the midst of some sandy islands, such as are known by the name of *keys*, where they procured a few clams and beans. Here Nelson was taken very ill with a violent heat in his bowels, a loss of sight, great thirst, and an inability to walk. A little wine, which had carefully been saved, with some pieces of bread soaked in it, was given to him in small quantities, and he soon began to recover. The boatswain and carpenter were also ill, and complained of headache and sickness of the stomach. Others became shockingly distressed with tenesmus; in fact, there were few without complaints.

A party was sent out by night to catch birds; they returned with only twelve noddies, but it is stated that, had it

not been for the folly and obstinacy of one of the party, who separated from the others and disturbed the birds, a great many more might have been taken. The offender was Robert Lamb, who acknowledged, when he got to Java, that he had that night eaten *nine* raw birds, after he separated from his two companions. The birds, with a few clams, were the whole of the supplies afforded at these small islands.

On the 3rd of June, after passing several keys and islands, and doubling Cape York, the north-easternmost point of New Holland, at eight in the evening the little boat and her brave crew once more launched into the open ocean. "Miserable," says Lieutenant Bligh, "as our situation was in every respect, I was secretly surprised to see that it did not appear to affect any one so strongly as myself; on the contrary, it seemed as if they had embarked on a voyage to Timor in a vessel sufficiently calculated for safety and convenience. So much confidence gave me great pleasure, and I may venture to assert that to this cause our preservation is chiefly to be attributed. I encouraged every one with hopes that eight or ten days would bring us to a land of safety; and, after praying to God for a continuance of His most gracious protection, I served out an allowance of water for supper, and directed our course to the west-south-west.

"We had been just six days on the coast of New Holland, in the course of which we found oysters, a few clams, some birds, and water. But a benefit, probably not less than this, was that of being relieved from the fatigue of sitting constantly in the boat, and enjoying good rest at night. These advantages certainly preserved our lives; and small as the supply was, I am very sensible how much it alleviated our distresses. Before this time Nature must have sunk under the extremes of hunger and fatigue. Even in our present situation, we were most deplorable objects, but the hopes of a speedy relief kept up our spirits. For my own part, incredible as it may appear, I felt neither extreme hunger nor thirst. My allowance contented me, knowing that I could have no more." In his manuscript journal, he adds, "This, perhaps, does not permit me to be a proper judge on a story of miserable people like us being at last driven to the necessity of destroying one another for food—but, if I may be allowed, I deny the fact in its greatest extent. I say, I do not believe that, among us, such a thing could happen, but death through famine would be received in the same way as any mortal disease."

On the 5th a booby was caught by the hand, the blood of

which was divided among three of the men who were weakest, and the bird kept for next day's dinner ; and on the evening of the 6th the allowance for supper was recommenced, according to a promise made when it had been discontinued. On the 7th, after a miserably wet and cold night, nothing more could be afforded than the usual allowance for breakfast ; but at dinner each person had the luxury of an ounce of dried clams, which consumed all that remained. The sea was running high and breaking over the boat the whole of this day. Mr. Ledward, the surgeon, and Lawrence Lebogue, an old hardy seaman, appeared to be giving way very fast. No other assistance could be given to them than a teaspoonful or two of wine, that had been carefully saved for such a melancholy occasion, which was not at all unexpected.

On the 8th the weather was more moderate, and a small dolphin was caught, which gave about two ounces to each man : in the night it again blew strong, the boat shipped much water, and they all suffered greatly from wet and cold. The surgeon and Lebogue still continued very ill, and the only relief that could be afforded them was a small quantity of wine, and encouraging them with the hope that a very few days more, at the rate they were then sailing, would bring them to Timor.

" On the morning of the 10th, after a very comfortless night, there was a visible alteration for the worse," says Mr. Bligh, " in many of the people, which gave me great apprehensions. An extreme weakness, swelled legs, hollow and ghastly countenances, a more than common inclination to sleep, with an apparent debility of understanding, seemed to me the melancholy presages of an approaching dissolution. The surgeon and Lebogue, in particular, were most miserable objects. I occasionally gave them a few teaspoonfuls of wine, out of the little that remained, which greatly assisted them. The hopes of being able to accomplish the voyage was our principal support. The boatswain very innocently told me that he really thought I looked worse than any in the boat. The simplicity with which he uttered such an opinion amused me, and I returned him a better compliment."

On the 11th, Lieutenant Bligh announced to his wretched companions that he had no doubt they had now passed the meridian of the eastern part of Timor, a piece of intelligence that diffused universal joy and satisfaction. Accordingly at three in the morning of the following day, Timor was discovered at the distance only of two leagues from the shore.

"It is not possible for me," says this experienced navigator, "to describe the pleasure which the blessing of the sight of this land diffused among us. It appeared scarcely credible to ourselves that, in an open boat, and so poorly provided, we should have been able to reach the coast of Timor in forty-one days after leaving Tofoa, having in that time run, by our log, a distance of three thousand six hundred and eighteen nautical miles; and that, notwithstanding our extreme distress, no one should have perished in the voyage."

On Sunday, the 14th, they came safely to anchor in Coupang Bay, where they were received with every mark of kindness, hospitality, and humanity. The houses of the principal people were thrown open for their reception. The poor sufferers when landed were scarcely able to walk; their condition is described as most deplorable. "The abilities of a painter could rarely, perhaps, have been displayed to more advantage than in the delineation of the two groups of figures which at this time presented themselves to each other. An indifferent spectator (if such could be found) would have been at a loss which most to admire, the eyes of famine sparkling at immediate relief, or the horror of their preservers at the sight of so many spectres, whose ghastly countenances, if the cause had been unknown, would rather have excited terror than pity. Our bodies were nothing but skin and bones, our limbs were full of sores, and we were clothed in rags; in this condition, with the tears of joy and gratitude flowing down our cheeks, the people of Timor beheld us with a mixture of horror, surprise, and pity.

"When," continues the commander, "I reflect how providentially our lives were saved at Tofoa, by the Indians delaying their attack; and that, with scarcely anything to support life, we crossed a sea of more than twelve hundred leagues, without shelter from the inclemency of the weather; when I reflect that in an open boat, with so much stormy weather, we escaped foundering, that not any of us were taken off by disease, that we had the great good fortune to pass the unfriendly natives of other countries without accident, and at last to meet with the most friendly and best of people to relieve our distresses—I say, when I reflect on all these wonderful escapes, the remembrance of such great mercies enables me to bear with resignation and cheerfulness the failure of an expedition, the success of which I had so much at heart, and which was frustrated at a time when I was congratulating myself on the fairest prospect of being able to complete it in a manner that



would fully have answered the intention of his Majesty, and the humane promoters of so benevolent a plan."

Having recruited their strength by a residence of two months among the friendly inhabitants of Coupang, they proceeded to the westward on the 20th August in a small schooner, which was purchased and armed for the purpose, and arrived on the 1st October in Batavia Road, where Mr. Bligh embarked in a Dutch packet, and was landed on the Isle of Wight on the 14th March 1790. The rest of the people had passages provided for them in ships of the Dutch East India Company, then about to sail for Europe. All of them, however, did not survive to reach England. Nelson, the botanist, died at Coupang; Mr. Elphinstone, master's mate, Peter Linkletter and Thomas Hall, seamen, died at Batavia; Robert Lamb, seaman (the booby-eater), died on the passage; and Mr. Ledward, the surgeon, was left behind, and not afterwards heard of. These six, with John Norton, who was stoned to death, left twelve of the nineteen, forced by the mutineers into the launch, to survive the difficulties and dangers of this unparalleled voyage, and to revisit their native country.

# THE FLIGHT TO VARENNES

By

JEANNE LOUISE HENRIETTE CAMPAN

*Madam Campan was a lady-in-waiting and a confidante of Marie Antoinette, the Queen of Louis XVI of France. In her memoirs she relates the terrible events leading up to the French Revolution and the final doom of the King and Queen, both of whom were guillotined. May 4th 1789 really marked the opening of the revolution, and in the autumn of that year the Royal family were moved to the Tuileries and virtually kept prisoners, although the King swore to maintain the new constitution. In 1791 the Royal family attempted to escape, and the famous flight to Varennes of June 1791 is the subject of this extract from Madame Campan's memoirs. Madame Elizabeth, to whom frequent reference is made, is a sister of Louis XVI.*

IN the beginning of the spring of 1791, the King, tired of remaining at the Tuileries, wished to return to Saint Cloud. His whole household was gone, and his dinner was prepared there. He got into his carriage at one ; the guard mutinied, shut the gates, and declared they would not let him pass. This event certainly proceeded from some appearances of a plan for an escape. Two persons, who drew near the King's carriage, were very ill-treated. My father-in-law was violently laid hold of by the guards, who took his sword from him. The King and his family were obliged to alight and return to their apartments. They did not much regret this outrage in their hearts, they saw it in a justification, even in the eyes of the people, of their intention to leave Paris.

So early as the month of March in the same year, the Queen began to busy herself in preparing for her departure. I spent that month with her, and executed a great number of secret orders which she gave me respecting the intended event.

It was with uneasiness that I saw her thus occupied with cares, which seemed to me useless, and even dangerous, and remarked to her that the Queen of France would find linen and gowns everywhere. My observations were made in vain ; she determined to have a complete wardrobe with her at Brussels, as well for her children as herself. I went out alone, and almost disguised, to purchase the articles necessary, and have them made up.

The Queen was to take only her first woman in attendance with her from Paris. She apprised me, that if I should not be on duty at the moment of departure, she would make arrangements for my joining her. She determined also to take with her her travelling dressing-case. She consulted me upon her idea of sending it off, under pretence of making a present of it to the Archduchess Christina, governess of the Low Countries. I ventured to oppose this plan strongly, and observed to her, that amidst so many people who watched her slightest actions, it might reasonably be foreseen that there would be found a sufficient number sharp-sighted enough to discover that the word present was used only as a pretence for sending away the property in question before her departure, she persisted in her intention, and all I could obtain, was, that the dressing-case should not be removed from her apartment, and a consent, that M. de . . ., *chargé d'affaires* from the Court of Vienna, during the absence of the Count de Mercy, should come and ask her at her toilette, before all her people, to order one exactly like her own for the governess of the Low Countries. The Queen, therefore, commanded me before the *chargé d'affaires* to order the article in question. This way of putting her intention in execution, occasioned only the slight inconvenience of an expense of five hundred louis, and appeared calculated to lull suspicion completely. If I omit no circumstance concerning this dressing-case, it is, because these minute details are important, since the early preparations for the journey were discovered by a woman whose conduct I had long suspected, and whom I dreaded would give information of them. This was a woman belonging to the wardrobe ; her duty continued uninterrupted throughout the year. As she had been placed with the Queen at the time of her marriage, her Majesty was accustomed to see her, and was pleased with her address and intelligence. Her situation was above that to which a woman of her class was entitled ; her salary and emoluments had been gradually increased, until they afforded her an income of about twelve thousand francs. She was hand-

some ; she received, in her apartments above the Queen's, in the little rooms between the two floors, several deputies of the *Tiers-état* ; and she had M. de Gouvion, an aide-de-camp of M. de La Fayette, for her lover. We shall soon see how far she carried her ingratitude.

About the middle of May 1791, a month after the Queen had ordered me to bespeak the dressing-case, she asked me whether it would soon be finished. I sent for the ivory-turner who had it in hand. He could not complete it until the end of six weeks ; I informed the Queen of this, and she told me she should not be able to wait for it, as she was to set out in the course of June. She added, that as she had ordered her sister's dressing-case, in the presence of all her attendants, she had taken a sufficient precaution, especially in saying that her sister was out of patience at not receiving it, and that, therefore, her own must be emptied and cleaned, and taken to the *chargé d'affaires*, who would send it off. I executed this order without appearing to conceal it by the slightest mystery. I desired the wardrobe woman to take out of the dressing-case all that it contained, because that intended for the Archduchess could not be finished for some time ; and to take great care to leave no remains of the perfumes which might not suit that princess. I will anticipate the order of events, to show that all these precautions were no less useless than dangerous.

After the return from Varennes, the Mayor of Paris put into the Queen's hands an information by the wardrobe woman, dated the 21st of May, in which she declared that preparations were being made at the Tuileries for departure ; that it was supposed she would not guess the true reason for the dressing-case being sent from the Queen to Brussels, but that the mention of a present made by her Majesty to her sister was but a mere pretence ; that her Majesty liked the article in question too well to deprive herself of it ; and that she had often said, it would be highly useful to her, in case she should have a journey to perform. She declared, also, that I was shut up a whole evening with the Queen, busied in packing her diamonds, and that she had found them separated with cotton upon the sofa in the Queen's closet, at the Tuileries. From this information, the Queen concluded that this woman had, unknown to her, a double key to the closet. Her Majesty did, one evening it is true, break off the arranging of her diamonds at seven o'clock to go to the card-table, and took the key of her closet, saying that she would come the next day and finish packing with me, that there was a sentinel

under the window ; that she had the key of her closet in her pocket, and, therefore, saw no danger of her jewels being stolen. It must, then, have been in the evening, after we left the closet, or very early the next morning, that the wretch discovered the secret preparations. The box of diamonds was placed in the hands of Leonard, the Queen's hairdresser, who went away with the Duke de Choiseul, and the deposit was left at Brussels. Their Majesties had already delivered up the crown diamonds, which they had in use, to the Commissioners of the Assembly ; those which the Queen sent out of France belonged to her in her own right.

It was during these preparations for departure that the Queen told me she had a very precious charge to entrust to me, and that I must find out some persons who could be relied upon, in an independent situation of life, and entirely devoted to their sovereigns, to whom I should confide a portfolio that she would place in my hands. I pitched upon Madame Valayer Coster, a member of the Academy of Painting, who lodged in the galleries of the Louvre, and in whom, as well as in her husband, I knew that all the qualifications required by the Queen were to be found. They proved as faithful as I had foretold they would be. It was not until September 1791, after the acceptance of the constitution, that they returned the portfolio to me. The guilty woman, of whom I have had but too much to say, made her communications respecting this fact also. She said she had seen a portfolio upon a chair, where there was not usually one placed ; that the Queen, pointing to it, spoke to me in a whisper, and that it had disappeared from that time. M. Bailly, who sent two whole pages of these denunciations to the Queen, made no use of them which could possibly be injurious to her Majesty.

Madame, the Duchess d'Angoulême, must have come into possession of all the Queen's diamonds. Her Majesty retained nothing but a suite of pearls, and a pair of ear-rings, composed of a ring and two drops, each formed of a single diamond. These ear-rings and several fancy trinkets, which were not worth the trouble of packing up, remained in her Majesty's commode at the Tuileries, and were, of course, seized by the committee which took possession of the palace, on the 10th of August.

After having made the preparations of which I have spoken, I had yet many private commissions, all relative to the departure, to fulfil. I was myself upon the eve of quitting Paris with my father-in-law. The Queen, apprehensive of the excesses in

which the people might indulge, at the moment of her flight, against those whose attachment to her person was known, being unwilling that he should remain in the capital, desired M. Vicq-d'Azyr to prescribe the waters of Mont-d'Or for him. Her Majesty had also the goodness to regret that my situation about her did not admit of my going away with her, and she offered me five hundred louis for the journey I had to take, until the time when I should rejoin her. I had as much money as was necessary for myself, and I knew, besides, of how much consequence it was to her to keep as much as possible ; I therefore did not accept them. As for the rest, she assured me that the King was only going to the frontiers, there to treat with the Assembly, and would quit France only in case his plan and proposals did not produce the effect hoped for. She relied upon a numerous party in the Assembly, many of the members of which, she said, were cured of their first enthusiasm. I set off, therefore, on the 1st of June, and on the 6th reached Mont-d'Or, daily expecting to hear of the departure. At length the news arrived. I had already prepared what I thought would make my escape certain ; but the steps taken by the Assembly after the departure of their Majesties would have rendered that escape more difficult than the Queen had thought. I was ready to begin my journey, when I heard a courier, who came from the little town of Besse, shouting to the inhabitants of Mont d'Or, with transports of joy, that the King and Queen were stopped. That same evening the intelligence was confirmed, and two days afterwards we received a letter from the Queen, written under her dictation, by one of her gentlemen ushers, whose devotion and discretion were known to her. It contained these words : " I dictate from my bath, into which I have just thrown myself, to support, at least, my physical strength. I can say nothing of the state of my mind ; we exist, that is all. Do not return here, excepting upon the receipt of a letter from myself : this is very important." This letter, unsigned, bore date the day of the Queen's arrival at Paris. We recognised the hand of him who wrote it, and were much affected at seeing, that at such a moment, the unfortunate princess had deigned to think of us. After the receipt of this letter, I returned to Clermont, where the Assembly's committee *de surveillance* would have had us arrested : but as it was proved that M. Campan was really ill at the moment of his departure from Paris, that rigorous course was waived. In the early part of August, the Queen desired me to return to Paris ; writing word, that she did not

see there was now any further danger in my going there, and that my speedy return would be agreeable to her. I therefore cannot give any other particulars of their Majesties' flight than those which I have heard related by the Queen, and those persons who witnessed her return home.

When the royal family was brought back from Varennes to the Tuileries, the Queen's attendants found the greatest difficulty in making their way to her apartments; everything had been arranged so that the wardrobe woman, who had acted as spy, should alone have the duty; and she was to be assisted in it by her sister and her sister's daughter.

M. de Gouvion, M. de La Fayette's aide-de-camp, had this woman's portrait placed at the foot of the staircase which led to the Queen's apartments, in order that the sentinel should not permit any other women to make their way in. As soon as the Queen was informed of this pitiful precaution, she informed the King of it, who, not being able to credit it, sent to the bottom of the staircase to ascertain the fact. His Majesty then called for M. de La Fayette, claimed freedom in his household, and particularly in that of the Queen, and ordered him to send a woman, in whom no one but himself could confide, out of the palace. M. de La Fayette was obliged to comply.

The measures adopted for guarding the King, were at the same time, rigorous, with respect to the entrance into the palace, and insulting as to his household. The commandants of battalion, stationed in the saloon called the *grand cabinet*, and which preceded the Queen's bed-chamber, were ordered to keep the door of it always open, in order that they might have their eyes upon the royal family. The King shut this door one day; the officer of the guard opened it, and told him such were his orders, and that he would always open it; so that his Majesty, in shutting it, gave himself useless trouble. It remained open even during the night, when the Queen was in bed; and the officer placed himself in an arm-chair, between the two doors, with his head turned towards her Majesty. They only obtained permission to have the inner door shut when the Queen was rising and dressing. The Queen had the bed of her first *femme de chambre* placed very near her own; this bed, which ran on castors, and was furnished with curtains, hid her from the officer's sight.

Madame de Jarjaie, my companion, who continued her functions during the whole period of my absence, told me, that one night, the commandant of battalion, who slept between the two doors, seeing that she was sleeping soundly, and that

the Queen was awake, quitted his post, and went close to her Majesty to advise her as to the line of conduct she was to pursue. Although she had the kindness to desire him to speak lower, in order that he might not disturb Madame de Jarjaie's rest, the latter awoke, and was near dying with the shock of seeing a man in the uniform of the Parisian guard so near the Queen's bed. Her Majesty comforted her, and told her not to rise ; that the person she saw was a good Frenchman, who was deceived respecting the intentions and situation of his sovereign and herself, but whose conversation showed a sincere attachment to the King. There was a sentinel in the back corridor, which runs behind the apartments in question, where there is a staircase, which was at that time a private one, and enabled the King and Queen to communicate freely. This post, which was very disagreeable, because it was to be kept four and twenty hours, was often claimed by St. Prix, an actor belonging to the French theatre. He devoted himself to it, if I may use the expression, in order to facilitate short interviews between the King and Queen in this corridor. He used to leave them at a distance, and give them notice if he heard the slightest noise. M. Collot, commandant of battalion of the national guard, who was charged with the military duty of the Queen's household, in like manner softened down, as far as he could with prudence, all the harsh orders he received ; for instance, one to follow the Queen to the very door of her wardrobe, was never executed. An officer of the Parisian guard dared to speak insolently to the Queen in her own apartment. M. Collot wished to make a complaint to M. de La Fayette against him, and have him broken. The Queen opposed it, and condescended to say a few words of explanation and kindness to the man ; he instantly became one of her most devoted partisans.

The first time I saw her Majesty, after the unfortunate catastrophe of the Varennes journey, I found her getting out of bed, her features were not very much altered ; but after the first kind words she uttered to me, she took off her cap, and desired me to observe the effect which grief had produced upon her hair. It became in one single night as white as that of a woman of seventy. I will not here describe the feelings which lacerated my heart. To speak of my own troubles would be very injudicious, when I am retracing those of so exalted an unfortunate. Her Majesty showed me a ring she had just had mounted for the Princess de Lamballe ; it contained a lock of her whitened hair, with the inscription, *bleached by*



sorrow. At the period of the acceptance of the constitution, the princess wished to return to France. The Queen, who had no expectation that tranquillity would be restored, opposed this ; but the attachment which Madame de Lamballe had vowed, impelled her to come and tempt her own destruction.

When I returned to Paris, most of the harsh precautions were abandoned : the doors were kept open ; greater respect was paid to the sovereign ; it was known that the constitution, soon to be completed, would be accepted, and a better order of things was hoped for.

On the day of my arrival, the Queen took me into her closet to tell me that she should have great need of me in a communication she had established with Barnave, Duport, and Alexandre Lameth. She informed me, that M. de J . . . was her negociator with those remnants of the constitutional party, who had good intentions, but unfortunately too late ; and told me that Barnave was a man worthy of esteem. I was astonished to hear Barnave's name pronounced with so much goodwill. When I quitted Paris, a great number of persons spoke of him only with horror. I observed this to her, and she was not surprised at it, but told me he was much altered ; that the young man, who was full of talent and noble feeling, belonged to that class which is distinguished by education, and merely misled by the ambition to which real merit gives birth. " A feeling of pride, which I cannot much blame in a young man belonging to the *Tiers-état*," said the Queen, speaking of Barnave, " made him support everything, which smoothed the road to rank and fame, for that class in which he was born ; and, if we get the power into our own hands again, Barnave's pardon is beforehand written in our hearts."—The Queen added, that she had not the same feeling towards those nobles who had thrown themselves into the revolutionary party, they who obtained all the marks of favour, and that very often to the injury of those of an inferior order, among whom the greatest talent was to be found : in short, that the nobles, who were born to be the safeguard of the monarchy, were too guilty, in having betrayed its cause, ever to deserve their pardon. The Queen astonished me more and more by the warmth with which she justified the favourable opinion she had formed of Barnave. She then told me that his conduct upon the road was perfectly correct, while Petion's republican rudeness was disgusting ; that the latter ate and drank in the King's berlin, in a slovenly manner, throwing the bones of the fowls out through the window, at the risk of sending them even

into the King's face ; lifting up his glass, when Madame Elizabeth poured him out wine, to show her that there was enough, without saying a word ; that this offensive behaviour must have been by design, because the man was not without education ; and that Barnave was hurt at it. On being pressed by the Queen to take something, " Madame," replied Barnave, " on so solemn an occasion, the deputies of the National Assembly ought to engage your Majesties' attention solely by their mission, and by no means about their wants." In short, his respectful delicacy, his considerate attentions, and all that he uttered gained the esteem, not only of the Queen, but of Madame Elizabeth also.

The King began to talk to Petion about the situation of France, and the motives of his conduct, which were founded upon the necessity of giving to the executive power a strength necessary for its action, for the good even of the constitutional act, since France could not be a republic.—" Not yet, 'tis true," replied Petion, " because the French are not ripe enough for that." This audacious and cruel answer silenced the King, who said no more until his arrival at Paris. Petion held the little Dauphin upon his knees, and amused himself with curling the beautiful light hair of the interesting child round his fingers ; and, as he spoke with much gesticulation, he pulled his locks hard enough to make the Dauphin cry out.—" Give me my son," said the Queen to him, " he is accustomed to tenderness and delicacy, which render him little fit for such familiarity."

The Chevalier de Dampierre was killed near the King's carriage, upon leaving Varennes. A poor village curé, some leagues from the place where the crime was committed, was imprudent enough to draw near to speak to the King ; the cannibals, who surrounded the carriage, rushed upon him. " Tigers," exclaimed Barnave, " have you ceased to be Frenchmen ? Nation of brave men, are you become a set of assassins ?"—These words alone saved the curé, who was already upon the ground, from certain death. Barnave, as he spoke to them, threw himself almost out of the coach-window ; and Madame Elizabeth, affected by this noble burst of feeling, held him by the skirt of his coat. The Queen, while speaking of this event, said, that in the most important and momentous events, whimsical contrasts always struck her, and that, on this occasion, the pious Elizabeth holding Barnave by the flap of his coat, was a surprising sight. The deputy was astonished in another way. Madame Elizabeth's comments

upon the state of France, her mild and persuasive eloquence, and the noble simplicity with which she talked to him, at the same time without sacrificing her dignity in the slightest degree, everything about that divine princess appeared to him celestial ; and his heart, which was doubtless inclined to noble feelings, if he had not followed the wrong path, was overcome by the most affecting admiration. The conduct of the two deputies convinced the Queen of the total separation between the republican and constitutional parties. At the inns, where she alighted, she had some private conversation with Barnave. The latter said a great deal about the errors committed by the royalists during the revolution, and declared he had found the interests of the court so feeble, and so badly defended, that he had been frequently tempted to go and offer it, in himself, a courageous wrestler, who knew the spirit of the age and nation. The Queen asked him, what were the weapons he would have recommended her to use. "Popularity, Madame"—"And how could I use that," replied her Majesty, "of which I had been deprived?" "Ah! Madame, it was much more easy for you to regain it, than for me to acquire it." This assertion would furnish matter for comment: I confine myself to the relation of this curious conversation.

The Queen mainly attributed the arrest at Varennes to M. Goguelat ; she said he calculated the time that would be spent in the journey erroneously. He performed that from Montmedy to Paris before taking the King's last orders, alone, in a post-chaise, and he founded all his calculations upon the time he spent in making that transit. The trial has been made since ; and it was found that a light carriage, without any courier, was nearly three hours less in running the distance, than a heavy carriage preceded by a courier.

The Queen also blamed him for having quitted the high road at Pont-de-Sommeville, where the carriage was to meet the forty hussars commanded by him. She thought that he ought to have dispersed the very small number of people at Varennes, and not to have asked the hussars whether they were for King or the nation ; that, particularly, he ought to have avoided taking the King's orders, as he was aware of the reply M. d'Inisdal had received, when it was proposed to carry off the King ; and that the King, having said to Goguelat, "*If force should be employed, will it be hot work?*" he answered, "*Very hot, Sire*": which was sufficient to drive the King to give twenty counter orders. Is it possible to conceive how such neglect could occur, as that of sending a courier to M. de Bouille,

who would have had time to reach Varennes with an imposing force ? or how nobody even thought of stopping the courier, who should follow the King ? Their Majesties alighted at the house of a grocer, called M. Sauce, the Mayor of Varennes. The King talked to him a long time respecting his reasons for quitting Paris, and wanted to prove to him the expediency of the measure, which, far from being hostile, was suggested by his love for his subjects. This Mayor could have saved the King. The Queen sat down in the shop between two piles of candles, and conversed with Madame Sauce, who seemed to be a woman of weight in her own household, and whom M. Sauce eyed, from time to time, as if to consult her : but the only reply the Queen got was : " What would you have, Madame : your situation is very unfortunate ; but you see that would expose M. Sauce ; they would cut his head off. A wife ought to think for her husband." " Well ! " replied the Queen, " mine is your King ; he has long made you happy, and wishes to do so still " Madame Sauce went on again about the dangers of her husband : the aide-de-camps came up, and the return to Paris was decided.

The Dauphin's first *femme de chambre*, calculating that delay might give M. de Bouillé time to bring up assistance, threw herself on a bed, and began to cry out that she was dying of a dreadful colic. The Queen went up to her, and the lady squeezed her hand to give her to understand what she was aiming at. Her Majesty said she could not leave a woman, who had sacrificed herself to attend her in a dangerous journey, in such a condition, and that she owed her every attention ; but this innocent stratagem was probably seen through, and not the slightest delay was granted.

After all that the Queen had said to me respecting the mistakes made by M. Goguelat, I thought him of course disgraced. What was my surprise, when, having been set at liberty after the amnesty which followed the acceptance of the constitution, he presented himself to the Queen, and was received with marks of the greatest kindness. She said he had done his best, and that the sincerity of his zeal ought to form an excuse for all the rest.

# RETREAT FROM MOSCOW

By

SERGEANT BOURGOGNE

*There was no greater military disaster in history than the retreat of Napoleon's Grand Army from Moscow in 1812. The Emperor had led an immense force against Russia, but when they reached Moscow, they found the city practically deserted, and the food stores fired. Napoleon was forced to retreat through the horrors of a Russian winter. His men were starving and were continually harried by bands of Russians. He took the flower of his army into Russia—only a handful returned. This is an extract from the memoirs of one French soldier who did survive that terrible march*

ON 18th November, the day after the battle of Krasnoe, we set out very early from our bivouac. The march was a sad and weary one, and terribly tiring. There was a thaw; our feet were wet through; and all day the fog was so thick we could see nothing. Our men were still in some sort of order, but the fighting of the preceding days and the forced abandonment of their imploring comrades had demoralised them; the same fate, no doubt, they thought was in store for them.

I was terribly tired that day. One of the men in our company named Labbé, seeing that I could scarcely walk, offered to carry my knapsack for me, as he had lost his own the day before. I gave it to him, as I knew he was honest; but it was like trusting my life in his hands, as the knapsack contained more than a pound of rice and oatmeal, picked up by chance at Smolensk, and kept by me for some desperate emergency, when there would be no more horses to eat. On that day the Emperor went on foot, carrying a stick.

At night it froze again, and the roads became so slippery

that we fell down continually, and many were seriously hurt. I walked last of the company, keeping an eye, as far as possible, on the man with my knapsack, and sometimes regretting that I had given it up, and resolving to get it back when we stopped for the night. When night came, it was so dark that it was impossible to see anything. I called out "Labbé ! Labbé !" and I heard him answer, "Here, sergeant !" but when I called again later, one of our men told me that he had just fallen down, and was probably following the regiment. I did not worry myself about it, as in a short time we should be obliged to come to a halt, and take up a position for the night. When we did so, the whole army was collected, except Marshal Ney's *corps d'armée*, which had dropped behind, and which we feared was lost.

Every one did as best he could during this wretched night. Several of us non-commissioned officers joined together, and took possession of a barn (we were close to a village without being aware of it). Many of the men had entered with us, but those who came too late for that mounted on the roof. Just then we were told that farther on there was a church (Greek) intended for our regiment's shelter, but that now it was filled with men from different regiments, who would let no one else enter.

On learning exactly where the church was, a dozen of us set out to find it. When we arrived, the men inside tried to prevent our entering. They were Germans, Italians, and a few Frenchmen, who tried to frighten us by presenting the points of their bayonets at us. We answered them in the same fashion, and forced an entrance. They drew back a little, and an Italian called out :

"Do as I do—load !"

"Ours are loaded—ready !" said one of our sergeant-majors, and we were on the point of a fierce encounter, when reinforcements arrived for us in the shape of some men from our regiment ; so seeing they had nothing to gain by fighting, and that we were not disposed to let them stay with us, the men in the church decided to leave.

Unfortunately for them, the night grew much colder, with a high wind and a fall of snow, and the next morning on going out we found many of the poor wretches dead by the side of the road. Others had dropped down farther on, while trying to find a place of shelter. We passed by these dead bodies in silence. We ought, no doubt, to have felt guilty and miserable at this sad spectacle, of which we were partly the cause ; but

we had arrived at the point of complete indifference to everything, even the most tragic events, saying to each other that soon we should be eating dead men, as there would be no more horses left.

An hour afterwards we got to Doubrowna, a little town partly inhabited by Jews, where all the houses were built of wood. Here the Emperor had passed the night with the Grenadiers and Chasseurs, and part of the artillery. They had been kept under arms all night by a false alarm. We crossed this town on our way to Orcha. After an hour's march, we had to pass over a deep ravine, which the baggage had enormous difficulty in crossing, and several horses died. At last, during the afternoon, we arrived at this little fortified town, garrisoned by men from different regiments. These were men who had stayed behind, and had come up in detachments to rejoin the Grand Army. There were amongst them some gendarmes and a few Poles. They were horror-struck at seeing our miserable condition, and at the enormous number of stragglers in such disorganisation. Part of the Guard were kept in the town to establish a little order, and a small distribution of flour and brandy was made from some stores found there. We found a pontoon train, and a great deal of artillery, horses, and harness, and by an extraordinary fatality we burned the boats forming the bridges, in order to make use of the horses to draw the guns. We little knew what was in store for us at the Berézina, where the bridge would have been of untold service to us.

We were now only seven or eight thousand men in the Guard, the remnant of thirty-five thousand. Although most of us marched in order, a good many straggled painfully behind. As I have already said, the Emperor and part of the Guard stayed in the town, and the rest of the army camped outside. During the night Marshal Ney arrived with the remainder of his *corps d'armée*.

Two or three thousand remained to him out of seven thousand. The Emperor's joy was unbounded when he heard that the Marshal was safe.

We stayed here over the 20th, and I spent the time looking for my friend with my knapsack, but in vain. On the 21st we set out without my having found him, and I began to despair, although I heard from many that he had been seen.

At a short distance from Orcha we heard musket-shots, and stopping for a moment, we saw some sledges intercepted by Cossacks. These men joined our ranks and we went forward

again. I searched for my man and the knapsack among the sledges, but again fruitlessly. We stayed that night in a village called Kokanow, of which nothing remained but a barn and two or three houses.

On the 22nd, after a wretched night, we set out very early, walking with great difficulty over a thawed, muddy road. At midday we reached Toloczin, where the Emperor had slept. We halted at the other side of the town, and drew up by the side of the road. While we were there, M. Césarisse, an officer in our company, told me that he had seen Labbé near a fire busy frying biscuits, and that he had ordered him to join his regiment. He answered that he was coming directly, but a horde of Cossacks came and took possession of the sledges, and most probably he had been taken also. So good-bye to my knapsack and its contents, which I had so set my heart on taking back to France! How proud I should have been to say, "I brought this from Moscow!"

However, to make quite sure, I thought I would see for myself, and I turned back to the end of the village, which was full of men from all regiments, walking about independently and obeying no orders but their own. I saw the Cossacks in the distance carrying off their prisoners—and no doubt my poor knapsack also.

I was looking about me to right and left, when I caught sight of a woman, dressed in a soldier's cloak, looking curiously at me, and I could not help thinking I had seen her before. She recognised me by my bearskin, and being the first to speak, she said she had seen me at Smolensk. Then I remembered her. She told me that the brigands had been taken at Krasnoe, before we got there, that they were in a house where they had beaten her, because she would not wash their shirts, and she had gone out to get water. She had seen some Russians and had run away. As for the brigands, they had fought desperately, trying to save their money, for they had much, she said, gold and jewels above all; but it had ended by their being killed, wounded, and plundered. She herself had been saved when the Imperial Guard arrived.

She would have told me much more if I had had time to listen to her. I asked her who was with her, and she said no one, that since the day her husband was killed she had been with the brigands, that she was now alone, but that, if I would take her under my protection, she would take good care of me, and I should be doing her a very great service. I



consented at once, never thinking of the figure I should cut in the regiment when I arrived there with a woman.

As she went she asked me what had become of my knapsack. So I told her its history, and how I had lost it. She told me not to worry about it, as she had a well-filled bag herself. She also carried a basket on her arm, and she added that if I could find a house or a stable to change in, she could give me some fresh linen. I accepted this joyfully, but as we were looking for a suitable place we heard the call to arms, and I heard the drums beating. I told the woman to follow me, and wait for me on the road.

When I joined my company, the sergeant-major asked me if I had found Labbé and the knapsack. I said no, and that I had given up all idea of finding them, but that instead I had found a woman.

"A woman!" he exclaimed; "what is the good of that? She can't wash your linen for you, as you have not got any."

"She will give me some."

"Ah," he said, "that's a different thing. And what about feeding her?"

"She will do as I do."

Just then the Emperor came past with King Murat and Prince Eugène. The Emperor then placed himself amongst the Grenadiers and Chasseurs and made them an address, telling them that the Russians were waiting for us at the crossing of the Bérézina, and had sworn that not one of us should pass over. Then, drawing his sword and raising his voice, he cried:

"Let us all swear to die fighting rather than not see our country again!"

The oath was taken. Bearskins and caps were waved at the points of bayonets, and shouts were heard of "Vive l'Empereur!" Marshal Mortier made us a similar address, and was received with the same enthusiasm, and so on with all the regiments.

It was a splendid moment, and for the time made us forget our miseries. If the Russians had only been within our reach then, we should have made short work of them, even had their numbers been six times greater than ours. We remained in this position till the right wing of the column began to move.

I had not forgotten my "wife," and while waiting for the regiment to start I went in search of her, but she was nowhere to be seen. She had been engulfed in the torrent of Prince Eugène's thousands. They and the corps belonging to

Marshals Ney and Davoust were in complete disorder ; three-quarters of them were sick and wounded, and the rest utterly demoralised and indifferent to everything.

I found myself at this moment near Marshal Lefebvre. He was alone and on foot in the middle of the road, shouting in his German accent, " Come, my men, let us get together ! Better large battalions than a pack of brigands and cowards." He spoke to the men who were continually straggling away without apparent reason from their corps, sometimes in front, sometimes behind.

I made several inquiries about my " wife," as I so badly wanted the change of linen she had promised me, but I never saw her again, and so I found myself bereft both of her and of my knapsack.

Walking thus with the rabble, I had got far in advance of my regiment, and I stopped to rest by a fire left from a bivouac.

Up to the battle of Krasnoe, I had managed to keep up my spirits, in spite of all the miseries I had to endure. I felt that the greater the danger and suffering, the greater the glory and honour, and my patience had astonished my comrades. But since the terrible encounters at Krasnoe, and, above all, since the news that two of my friends (besides Bêloque and Capon) had been, one killed and the other mortally wounded — (u)

To complete my misery, a sledge came up and stopped close to me. I asked who the wounded man was, and they told me it was an officer of their regiment. It turned out to be poor Legrand, who related to me the way he had been wounded. His comrade, Laporte, from Cassel, near Lille, had stayed behind invalided at Krasnoe ; but hearing that his regiment was fighting, he set out to join it. Hardly, however, had he taken his place in the ranks, when he had both his legs broken. Legrand, seeing Laporte arrive, came to speak to him, and the same shot wounded him in the right leg. Laporte remained dead on the battlefield, and Legrand was taken to the town ; he was placed in a wretched Russian cart drawn by a miserable horse, but the cart broke up the first day. Fortunately for him, close by was a sledge, into which he was moved ; four men of his regiment were with him, and he had travelled in this manner for six days. I bade farewell to the unfortunate Legrand, and wished him a safe journey ; he answered that he trusted himself to the care of God and the friendship of his brave comrades. One of the men then took the horse by the bridle, another gave it a blow, and two pushed

from behind ; with great difficulty the sledge was thus set in motion. As I saw it off, I thought with such equipment it could hardly go much farther.

After this I never felt the same ; I was depressed, and a prey to gloomy forebodings. My head ached and burned ; I was in a fever. No doubt it was greatly owing to fatigue, as we were now obliged to start very early in the morning, and walk till very late. The days were so short ; it was not light till eight o'clock, and it was dark by four in the afternoon. This was the reason of so many unfortunate men losing their way, for it was always night when we arrived at the bivouac, and all the remains of the different corps were in terrible confusion. At all hours of the night we heard the weak, worn-out voices of new arrivals calling out " Fourth Corps ! " " First Corps ! " " Third Corps ! " " Imperial Guard ! " and then the voices of others lying down with no strength left, forcing themselves to answer, " Here, comrades ! " They were not trying any longer to find their regiments, but simply the *corps d'armée* to which they had belonged, and which now included the strength of two regiments at most, where a fortnight earlier there had been thirty.

No one now knew anything about himself, or could mention which regiment he belonged to. Many, after walking the whole day, were forced to wander about half the night to find their particular corps. They hardly ever succeeded, then, not being aware of the hour of departure in the morning, they slept too late, and on waking found the Russians upon them. Thousands of men were taken prisoners, and perished in this way.

I kept near the fire, standing and trembling all over, and leaning on my musket. Three men were sitting round the fire in silence, mechanically watching people passing in the road, seeming disposed to stay where they were, simply for want of strength to move. I began to be uneasy at not seeing my regiment pass, when I felt some one pull at my bearskin cloak. It was Grangier come to tell me that the regiment was passing ; but my eyes were so worn out that I could not see him, even looking straight at him.

" And the woman ? " he said.

" Who told you anything about her ? "

" The sergeant-major. But where is she ? "

" I don't know, but I do know that she has a knapsack full of linen, which I want badly, and if ever you meet her you might tell me. She is dressed in a soldier's grey cloak,

with a sheepskin cap on her head. She wears black gaiters, and she carries a basket on her arm."

Grangier thought (as he afterwards told me) that I was light-headed, and, taking me by the arm, he led me down the road, saying :

"We must get on, or we shall not catch up with the regiment."

We came up with it, however, after passing the thousands of men from all kinds of regiments who walked confusedly, hardly able to drag themselves along. We foresaw, on looking at them, that the journey, if long, would be a fatal one to most of us.

The march was indeed a long one ; we passed a place where the Emperor was supposed to sleep, although he had got far in advance of it. A great number of men stopped here, for it was very late, and we heard that two leagues separated us yet from our bivouac in a large forest.

The road here was very wide, and bordered on each side by birch-trees. There was plenty of room for us and the carts and waggons ; but when evening came on there was nothing to be seen all the length of the road but dead horses, and the farther we advanced, the more the road became blocked with carts and dying horses. Whole teams succumbed at once from fatigue. The men who could go no farther stopped and made bivouacs underneath large trees ; here they said they had wood at hand to make fires from the broken carts, and horse-flesh to eat, and these they would not find farther on.

For a long time I had walked alone in the midst of a miscellaneous rabble, forcing myself on to reach the camping-place arranged. The road became more difficult at every step, as it had begun to freeze again on the top of the half-melted snow, and I fell continually. In the midst of these miseries the night suddenly fell.

The north wind had redoubled its fury. I had lost sight of my comrades ; several men, lost like myself, strangers to me, who did not belong to my regiment, by superhuman efforts dragged themselves along to come up with their own regiments. They did not answer when I spoke to them ; they were too weak even for that. Others fell down dying, never to rise again. Soon I was alone, with only dead bodies along the road to guide me. The trees had quite disappeared ; it was perhaps seven o'clock. The snow, now falling heavily, prevented my seeing the direction in which I was going, and the violent wind had already filled up the traces of the advancing column.

Up till that time I had worn my bearskin cloak with the

fur outside, but now, seeing what an awful night was in store for me, I stopped a moment, and turned the fur inside. Owing to this I was able luckily to withstand the cold of this disastrous night, falling to twenty-two degrees of frost. I arranged the cloak over my right shoulder in the direction of the wind, and I walked thus for an hour, during which I am certain I only went a quarter of a league ; for, often seized by a blinding storm of snow, I had to turn round and thus retrace my steps without being aware of it. It was only the sight of the dead bodies of men and horses, and the mass of broken vehicles I had passed before, that convinced me I was in the wrong direction. I had then to take my bearings again.

Either the moon or a faint Northern Light appeared in the sky at intervals. Black clouds shot swiftly across this light, but when it was clear it enabled me to distinguish one object from another. I saw far off a black mass which I imagined to be the immense forest we had to cross before reaching the Bérézina, for now we were in Lithuania. I made a guess that this forest was perhaps a league off.

Unfortunately a terrible sleepiness, the certain forerunner of death, began to come over me. I felt quite exhausted ; my legs refused to carry me farther. I had fallen down half asleep several times, and had I not been roused each time by the cold, all would have been over with me.

The road was here completely blockaded by dead men and horses, preventing me from dragging myself along, for I had no longer the strength to lift my feet from the ground. Whenever I fell it seemed as if I were dragged down by the unfortunate men stretched on the snow. Often these men would try to catch hold of the legs of those who passed, imploring their help, and many, in stooping to give help, fell themselves, not to rise again.

I walked on aimlessly for about ten minutes. I staggered as if I were drunk ; my knees trembled under my weight. I thought my last hour had come at last, when all at once I stumbled over a sword on the ground, and fell all my length, stupefied, my chin having struck the butt-end of my musket. Coming to myself a little and getting on my knees, I picked up my musket, and was preparing to stand, when I saw a stream of blood coming from my mouth, and with a cry of despair, trembling with terror, I fell back again.

I had been heard by a miserable man lying a few yards off, and in a feeble voice he begged me to help him—I ! so much in need myself. “ Stop ! help us ! ”

The voice ceased ; but I remained, still trying to find out who had spoken. Hearing nothing more, I began to think my senses had deceived me, and I called out as loud as I possibly could :

"Where are you ?" adding to myself, "If I only had a companion, we could walk on for the rest of the night encouraging each other."

Then I heard the voice again, sadder and feebler this time :

"Come here and help."

At that moment the moon came out, and I saw two men about ten yards off—one stretched at full length, and the other sitting near him. With great difficulty I struggled over a ditch filled with snow, and got near them. The man sitting laughed like a madman when I spoke to him, and said, "Don't you know—you mustn't forget!" and began laughing again.

I recognised the terrible laughter of death. The other man was still living ; turning his head a little, he said these last words to me

"Save my uncle—help him. I am dying !"

I spoke to him, but he said no more. Then I turned to the other, and encouraged him to rise and come with me. He looked at me without speaking, and I saw that he was wrapped in a great fur-lined cloak which he tried to throw off. I endeavoured, without success, to help him to rise ; but on taking hold of his arm I noticed that he wore officer's epaulettes. He began talking incoherently about reviews and parades, and ended by falling on one side with his face in the snow. I was obliged to leave him ; if I had remained I must myself have succumbed to the same fate. Before I left I picked up a pouch lying on the ground, in the hope of finding something inside, but it was full of rubbish and papers only. Having regained the road, I walked slowly along, listening as I went, as now I constantly seemed to hear cries of distress.

Soon I began to walk faster, in the hope of coming to some bivouac, and at last I got to a point in the road completely blocked up with dead horses and broken carts. The bodies of men from various regiments were scattered round. Several belonged to the Young Guard, recognisable by their shakos. In this immense cemetery and this awful silence I was alone, a prey to the most gloomy thoughts—of my comrades from whom I was separated, my country, my relations—and I began to cry like a child. The tears relieved me, and gradually my courage came back.

Close to me I found a small hatchet, such as every company

carries in a campaign. I tried to cut off a piece from one of the horses, but the flesh was frozen so hard that this was impossible. I had spent the remainder of my strength, and I fell exhausted, but the exertion had warmed me a little. I had picked up with the hatchet a few pieces of ice, which I now found to be blood from the horse. I ate a little of it, and put the rest carefully in my knapsack, and feeling stronger, I set out again, trusting to God's mercy ; taking care to avoid the dead bodies, I went on, stopping and feeling my way whenever a cloud passed over the moon.

After walking for some time, I noticed at a short distance off something I took for a waggon. When I got nearer I saw it was a canteen cart belonging to a regiment of the Young Guard. The horses which had drawn it were not only dead, but partly cut in pieces for eating. Around the cart were seven dead bodies almost naked and half covered with snow ; one of them was still covered with a cloak and a sheepskin. On stooping to look at the body, I saw that it was a woman. The instinct of self-preservation was at this time the first with me, and, forgetting that I had ineffectually tried the same thing a short time before, I set to work to hack off a piece of one of the horses. I found that this time again I was utterly unable to do it, and so I decided to spend the night in the cart, which was covered. I approached the dead woman to take the sheepskin for a covering, but it was impossible to move it. Noticing, however, that she wore a leather strap round her body, buckled on the other side, and that the strap must be unfastened, I put my musket under her body to act as a lever, but I had hardly done so, when a piercing cry came from the cart. " Marie," it said, " Marie, give me something to drink ! I am dying ! "

I was stupefied. The same voice repeated directly afterwards, " Ah, my God ! "

Mounting on the body of the horse in the shafts, I steadied myself by the top of the cart. I asked what was the matter. A feeble voice answered with some difficulty, " Something to drink."

I thought at once of the frozen blood in the pouch, and tried to get down to fetch it, but the moon suddenly disappeared behind a great black cloud, and I as suddenly fell on the top of three dead bodies. My head was down lower than my legs, and my face resting on one of the dead hands. I had been accustomed for long enough to this sort of company, but now—I suppose because I was alone—an awful feeling of terror came over me. It was like a nightmare. I could not move,

and I began screaming like a madman, as if something were holding me. But, in spite of all my efforts, I could not move. I tried to help myself up by my arm, but I found my hand on a face, and my thumb went into its mouth !

At that moment the moon came out and showed me all my dreadful surroundings. I shuddered all over, left hold of my support, and fell back again immediately. But a change came over me now ; I felt ashamed of my weakness, and a wild sort of frenzy, instead of terror, took possession of me. I got up, raving and swearing, and trod on anything that came near me - faces, arms, and legs, not caring which ; and I cursed the sky above me, defying it, and taking my musket, I struck at the cart - very likely I struck also at the poor devils under my feet

When I felt calmer, I decided to spend the night in the cart, as some sort of shelter from the cold ; and taking a piece of the frozen blood from the pouch, I climbed inside, feeling for the man who had asked me for drink, and who had ever since uttered feeble cries. When I got near him, I saw that his left leg was amputated

I asked him the name of his regiment, but he did not answer. So, finding his head, I put a bit of the ice into his mouth. The man next him was as cold and hard as marble. I tried to move him, so as to take his place, and be able to leave the next day with those who were still behind, but I could not do it. I now saw that he had only a few moments to live, so I covered him with two cloaks belonging to the dead man, and searched in the cart for anything I might find useful. Finding nothing, I turned round to speak to the man again. I got no reply, and, passing my hand over his face, I found it quite cold, and the piece of ice I had given him still between his lips. His sufferings were over.

I now prepared to leave, but waited to take another look at the dead woman, thinking it might be Marie the *cantinière*, whom I knew well as coming from my native country. I looked at her carefully by the light of the moon, and satisfied myself that it was not she

With my musket under the right arm like a hunter, two pouches, one of red leather and the other of grey canvas, which I had just found, slung across me, a piece of the frozen blood in my mouth, and my hands in my pockets, I started off. It was perhaps nine o'clock ; the snow had stopped falling, the wind had abated in strength, and the cold was not quite so intense. I continued to walk in the direction of the wood.



At the end of half an hour the moon disappeared again. This was terrible for me. I stopped for a few minutes, stamping my feet on the ground to prevent their being frozen, and waiting for the light to come out again ; but I was disappointed in this, as the moon appeared no more.

My eyes, however, became accustomed to the dark, and I could soon see well enough to go on, but all at once I discovered I was not on the same road. In naturally trying to avoid the north wind, I had turned my back to it. My opinion was confirmed by my not seeing any of the army *débris* on the road.

I cannot say for how long I had been walking in this new direction, when I saw that I had got to the edge of a precipice. I made the discovery too late, however, to save myself, and I rolled down for at least forty feet, although my fall was broken by bushes on the way. This time I thought that I was quite done for, and, closing my eyes, I resigned myself to God's will. When I reached the bottom I was stunned for a time, but, after all my adventures, I had ceased being astonished at anything, and I soon got up and began to search for my musket, which I had lost in my fall ; however, I decided to leave it and wait for daylight. As I drew my sword from its sheath and felt my way, I now became aware of a waggon close to where I had fallen, and the bodies of two dead horses, and feeling something warm under my feet, I found I was standing on the ashes of a half-extinct fire. So I lay down, and bathing my hands in the ashes to warm them, I luckily found a few pieces of coal, and was able by blowing to revive a few sparks. But where could I get wood to relight the fire ? I dared not leave the ashes, for fear my sparks might be extinguished for good. I tore off a piece of my shirt, already in rags, made a match of it and lighted it. Then feeling all round me, I fortunately came upon some tiny fragments of wood, and with much difficulty got them alight. Very soon flames crackled up, and in a minute or two I had quite a large fire.

I could now see for several yards round me, and I caught sight of some large letters on the waggon, " *Garde Impériale. État Major.*" Over the inscription was the eagle. As far as I could see, the ground was covered with helmets, shakos, swords, cuirasses, broken chests, empty portmanteaus, bits of torn clothing, saddles, costly schabraques, and quantities of other things. But hardly had I glanced round me, when I became possessed with the idea that this place might be near a Cossack bivouac, and I felt terribly frightened, and dared not

keep my fire up any longer. If Frenchmen had been anywhere near, I should have seen some bivouac fires. This place, above all others, sheltered as it was from the wind, would have been chosen for a bivouac. I was at a loss whether to stay or go.

While I reflected my fire had diminished, and I dared not put on more kindling. But at last the desire for warmth and rest overbore the feelings of fear. I picked up as much wood as I could find and piled it up near me. I also collected a number of schabraques to sit on, and wrapping myself in my bearskin cape, with my back against the waggon, I arranged myself for the night.

In putting wood on the fire I had found some horse-flesh—enough to stay the hunger which now devoured me. Although covered with snow and ashes, it was more than I had dared to hope for. Since the evening before, I had eaten nothing but half a dead raven I had found, and a few spoonfuls of gruel mixed with grains of oats and rye, and salted with powder.

I hardly waited for my cutlet to be warmed through before I bit into it, in spite of the ash which covered it. In this way I made my miserable dinner, looking round me from time to time, to make sure that things were safe.

My situation was slightly better than before. I was not obliged to keep on walking, I was sheltered from the wind and cold, I had a fire for warmth, and food ; but I was so terribly tired that I fell asleep while I was eating—sleep broken, however, by fear, and by dreadful pains in my legs. I felt as if I had been beaten all over. I do not know how long I slept, but on awaking there was still no appearance of daylight. In Russia the nights now are so long, and in summer there is scarcely any night at all.

I had fallen asleep with my feet in the ashes, and when I woke they still felt warm. I had learnt by experience that warmth refreshes tired limbs and soothes pain, so I picked up and collected all the wood I could find, put it on my fire, and relit it.

I could now see round me again, and on my left caught sight of some object I took for an animal. As there are so many bears in Russia, I felt sure this must be one, especially as it walked on all fours. When it got to a distance of five or six yards, I saw that it was a man. To guard against a surprise, I drew my sword, and, advancing towards the man, I cried, "Who are you?" at the same moment placing the point of my sword against his back, as I saw him to be a Russian, a real Cossack with a long beard.

He raised his head and threw himself down like a slave, trying to kiss my feet, and saying, "Dobray Frantsouz," and other words which I understood to mean that he was frightened. If he had only known it, I was as much frightened as he. He knelt upright to show me a sword-cut he had had on his face. I noticed then, even in this position, his head reached to my shoulders, so that his full height would be over six feet. I signed to him to come near the fire; then he made me understand that he had another wound—a ball had struck him in the stomach. The sword-cut on his face was frightful. It began at the top of the head, and cut open his face to the chin, losing itself in the beard. He lay down on his back to show me the bullet-wound, and I could see in this position that he was unarmed. Then, without saying anything more, he turned on to his side. I sat opposite to him to watch him. I did not wish to sleep again, as I intended before daylight appeared to set fire to the waggon and leave at once; but suddenly the terrible thought struck me that the waggon might be full of powder!

I jumped up, tired as I was, cleared at one bound the fire and the poor devil lying beside it, and set off running, but stumbling over a cuirass in the way, I fell all my length on the ground. I was fortunate enough not to hurt myself; I might well have done so, with all the firearms lying about. I got up and walked backwards, eyes fixed on the waggon, as if I expected an explosion every instant. At last I recovered from my terror, and came back to the place I had left so foolishly, for I was quite as safe there as twenty yards off.

I took off the pieces of burning wood and carefully carried them to the place where I had fallen; then I took the cuirass to gather snow in and put out the fire. But I had hardly begun this work, when I heard a flourish of trumpets, and after listening attentively, I recognised it for the Russian cavalry, announcing that they were not far off. I saw the Cossack raise his head at the sound. I tried to read his thoughts by his expression, for the fire was now bright enough for me to see his features, which were truly hideous. He squinted, and his eyes were deeply set beneath a low, prominent forehead, his hair and beard were red and thick like a mane, giving him a wild and savage appearance. His shoulders were of Herculean proportions. He was probably suffering terribly from his wound, for he writhed as he lay, and from time to time ground his teeth. I was listening to the sound of the trumpets in a dazed sort of way, when all at once I heard another

noise just behind me. I turned round, and, to my horror, saw the waggon opening like a tomb, and coming out of it an enormous individual, white as snow from head to foot, like the commander's ghost in the "*Festin de Pierre*," holding up the top of the waggon with one hand, and having a drawn sword in the other. I looked silently at this spectre, walking a few steps backward, and drawing my sword while waiting for it to speak first. It was trying, without success, to unfasten the great white cloak it wore with the hand which held the sword, as the other was engaged in holding up the top of the waggon.

At last, breaking the silence, I asked in rather a trembling voice :

"Are you a Frenchman?"

"Yes, of course I am French! What a d——d silly question! There you stand like a church candle! You see what a fix I am in, and you don't attempt to help me out of this coffin. I seem to have frightened you, my good fellow."

"Yes, you did frighten me, but I thought you might be another of these beauties"—pointing to the man at the fire.

I helped him out as I spoke, and he threw off his cloak. Imagine my surprise and delight when I recognised one of my old friends of the Grenadiers of the Old Guard, a comrade called Picart—Picart by name and *Picard* by nation—whom I had not seen since the Emperor's review at the Kremlin! He and I had made our first campaign together; we had been at the battles of Jena, Pultusk, Eylau, Tilsit, and later, in 1809, at Mora, on the Spanish frontier, and other campaigns since then, although not in the same regiment. Picart scarcely knew me again, I had altered so much and looked so miserable. We gazed at each other in amazement—I to see him looking so clean and well, and he to find me so thin, and looking, as he said, like Robinson Crusoe. At last he said:

"Tell me, sergeant, my old friend, by what luck or misfortune do I find you here, alone and at night, with that villainous Cossack. Just look at him! See his eyes! He has been here since five o'clock yesterday, and then he disappeared. I can't think why he has come back. And you? What brought you here in the middle of the night?"

"Before I tell you, have you a bit of something to eat about you?"

"Yes, sergeant, a little biscuit."

And he opened his knapsack and drew out a piece of biscuit the size of his hand, which I devoured at once. I had not tasted bread since 27th October. As I ate I said:

"Picart, have you any brandy?"

"No, *mon pays*!"

"I thought I smelt something like it."

"You are right," he said. "Yesterday, when the waggon was pillaged, there was a bottle of brandy; but they quarrelled over it, and it was broken and the brandy spilt."

I said I should like to see the place where it happened, and when he showed me I gathered up some snow *à l'eau de vie*, just as before I had collected horse's blood *à la glace*.

"That's good," said Picart. "I never thought of doing that. I think we can manage to get drunk, as there were several bottles in the waggon."

The biscuit and brandied snow had done me a great deal of good, so I related to Picart all that had happened to me since the evening before. He could scarcely believe me; but when I told him of the misery the entire army was suffering, including his regiment and all the Imperial Guard, he was distressed beyond words. Picart knew nothing of what had been going on.

Since the battle of Malo-Jaroslavetz, Picart had been separated from his regiment, as he had been sent in the escort of a convoy composed of part of the Imperial equipage. This detachment was always two or three days' march in advance of the army, and in consequence had not suffered anything like the same privations as the rest. As there were only four hundred of them, they had often been able to find provisions, and, besides, had means of transport. At Smolensk they had found enough flour and biscuits to last for several days. At Krasnoe they had the good luck to arrive and get away twenty-four hours before the Russians got there. At Orcha again they had found flour. In any village they came to there were always houses enough available for shelter, if only post-houses at some distance from each other. We, on the other hand, had to march a hundred and fifty thousand strong to begin with, afterwards only half that number, and had had only forests and marshes to sleep in, only horse-flesh to eat—and very little of it—water to drink, and sometimes not even that. My old comrade's sufferings only began when he joined me.

Picart told me that the man lying by our fire had been wounded by some Polish Lancers in an attack during the afternoon. This is the account he gave of it:

"More than six hundred Cossacks and other cavalry

attacked our convoy. We were sheltered, however, by our carts, formed into a square, and letting the enemy come quite close to us, at our first discharge we stretched eleven of them on the snow; a greater number still were wounded and carried off by their horses. They fled, but met some Polish Lancers of General Dombrowski's corps, who put them to utter rout. The man by the fire was brought back a prisoner, and several others with him, but I don't know why they left him. After the affair I told you of, there was a good deal of confusion. Those in charge of the waggons tried to get through the defile near the forest before each other, so that the shelter of the trees might guard them against a surprise. Some of them, hoping to find a crossing higher up, were deceived by the aspect of the snow, and fell into a deep crevasse—the first waggon turned completely over.

"The other waggons avoided the same fate by turning to the left, but I do not know if they arrived safely or not. They left me here to take care of this d—d waggon, and two Chasseurs with me, saying that they would send some men and horses to fetch it or its contents away. An hour afterwards, however, as it was getting dark, nine men, stragglers from different regiments, passed by. Seeing the overturned waggon, and only three men to guard it, they broke into it, on the pretext of finding food, in spite of everything we said to the contrary.

"Seeing that all our efforts were unavailing, we followed their example, taking and putting aside anything we could find. But it was now too late, as all the best things had been taken, and the horses were cut up into twenty pieces. I managed to secure this white cloak for myself. I cannot understand how the Chasseurs with me contrived to get away without my seeing them."

I told Picart that the men who had pillaged the waggon belonged to the Grand Army, and if he had only asked them for news they could have told him as much, or more, than I.

"After all, Picart, it was just as well that they took what they did, for the Russians will be here very soon."

"You are right," said Picart; "and we had better put our arms in order."

"First of all, I must find my musket," I said. "I have never lost it before. I have carried it for six years, and I am so familiar with it that at any hour of the night, in the middle of a pile of others, I know it by touching it—even by the noise it makes in falling."

As no fresh snow had fallen, I fortunately was able to find it. Picart helped me by lighting my way with a piece of resinous wood.

After having looked to our boots—an important consideration—we cooked a piece of horse-flesh, of which Picart had a good store. After eating, and drinking a little brandied snow, we put some meat into our knapsacks, and, standing to warm ourselves before the fire, we considered the next step to be taken.

"Well," said the good fellow, "which way now for us?"

"That infernal music's in my ears still," I said.

"Perhaps we are making a mistake. Very likely it's the first bugle, or our Horse-Grenadiers' reveille."

I interrupted Picart by telling him that there had been no first bugle or reveille for the last fortnight; that we had no more cavalry; that with the few that still remained a squadron called the Doomed Squadron had been formed, commanded by the oldest Marshal in France, that the Generals were Captains, and the Colonels and other officers served as private soldiers; that just the same thing had happened to a battalion now called the Doomed Battalion; that, in short, of forty thousand men in the cavalry, only one thousand remained.

Without leaving him time to reply, I told him that what we had heard was the signal of departure for the Russian cavalry, and it was that which brought him out of the waggon.

"Oh, *mon pays*, it wasn't only that which made me clear out. I had been watching you some time trying to set me on fire!"

Picart had hardly finished speaking, when he seized me by the arm suddenly, saying, "Silence! Lie down!" I threw myself on the ground at once. He followed my example, and covered the fire with a cuirass. I looked up, and saw the Russian cavalry defile above us in the utmost silence. This lasted for quite a quarter of an hour.

As soon as they had gone, Picart said, "Follow me," and, linking arms, we started walking in the direction they had come from.

After going for some time, Picart stopped, saying quite softly:

"Now we can breathe, we are safe, at least, for a time. We've been lucky, for if that wounded bear" (the Cossack) "had seen his people, he would have bellowed like a bull to attract them, and God knows what would have happened then! But that reminds me: I have forgotten something most important—a saucepan at the back of the waggon—more useful

for us than anything else. We must go back for it." As he saw I was unwilling, he said, "Come quick, or we may die of hunger!"

We got back to our bivouac. We found the fire almost extinct, and the poor devil of a Cossack rolling about in the snow in the most terrible sufferings, with his head almost in the fire. We could do nothing to relieve him, but we laid him on some sheepskin schabraques, so that he might die more comfortably.

"He will not die just yet," said Picart. "Look at his eyes: they shine like two candles."

We had placed him sitting up, holding him by his arms, but as soon as we let him go he fell down again, his face in the fire. We dragged him out only just in time to prevent his being burnt. We left him then to look for our saucepan, which we found so battered that it was past using. Picart, however, strapped it all the same on to my back.

We then tried to get up the steep bank, and reach the wood before daylight, where there would be shelter both from the cold and the enemy. After twice rolling down from the top to the bottom, we managed to make a footing in the snow. We reached the top at the exact place from which I had fallen the evening before, and where the Russian cavalry had filed past. We stopped for an instant to take breath and make out our bearings.

"Straight on," said Picart. "Follow me."

He started off as he spoke, and I followed; but hardly had he gone twenty yards when he disappeared in a hole six feet deep. He stood up without speaking, and I helped him out with his masket; but as soon as he was safe he began swearing against the God of Russia and the Emperor Napoleon, whom he called "Conscript."

"He is a regular fool of a conscript to have waited so long in Moscow. A fortnight was long enough to eat and drink everything we found there; but to stay there thirty-four days just waiting for winter to come on! I call that folly. If he were here, I could tell him to his face that isn't the way to lead men. Good God! the dances he has led me the last sixteen years. We suffered enough in Egypt—in the Syrian deserts, but that's nothing compared with these deserts of snow!" and he began blowing on his hands.

"Come, my poor fellow," I said, "this is not the time to stand and talk—we must do something; let us see if we can't find a better way to the left."



Picart had drawn out the ramrod of his musket, and walked about sounding the snow in front of him. It was just as deep all round. In the end we got across near where he had fallen in. Once on the other side, we went on, still sounding as we went. Half-way to the wood we came upon another deep ditch, like that one in which we had spent the night. We crossed it, and with very great difficulty reached the other side. We were so tired that we were forced to stop and take breath.

To the right we saw some black clouds coming on us with frightful rapidity. The clouds coming with a north wind foretold a terrible storm, and a cruel day in store for us. The wind roared through the pines and birch-trees, and drove us just the way we did not want to go. Sometimes we fell into holes concealed by the snow. At last, after an hour's walking, we arrived at our haven just as the snow began to fall in great flakes.

The storm burst with such force that trees broken or torn up by the roots fell on all sides, and we were compelled to leave the forest. We kept on the edge of the wood, with the wind to our left, but were stopped by a great lake which we could have easily crossed, as it was frozen hard, if it had been in the right direction. The quantity of snow falling prevented our seeing, and we were forced finally to stop altogether, sheltering behind two large birch-trees, until the weather had mended a little.

For a long time we stood there, stamping our feet to keep out the frost, when I noticed that the wind had abated a little. I mentioned this to Picart, and proposed going farther on. We had skirted a good way along the lake, when suddenly Picart stopped and looked steadily before him. He then seized my arm and whispered

"Hold your tongue!" Then, dragging me behind a bush, he said in a low voice, "Don't you see?"

"I don't see anything. What is it?"

"Smoke. A bivouac."

I looked, and saw it too. An idea came to me, and I said: "Perhaps the fire belongs to the bivouac of the cavalry we saw this morning."

"I think very likely it does," he said, "we must behave as if we were sure of it. We made a great mistake this morning in not loading our muskets while we were near the fire. Now our hands are numbed, and the barrels full of snow, we can't do it."

The snow fell very lightly now, and the sky was clearer.

All at once I caught sight of a horse gnawing the bark of a birch on the edge of the lake. I pointed it out to Picart, and as the horse was not harnessed, he thought it might be a wounded one, abandoned by the Russian cavalry.

While we were talking, the horse suddenly threw up his head and began to neigh, then quietly came straight up to us and snuffed at Picart as if he knew him. We dared neither move nor speak. The confounded horse stopped there, his head against Picart's fur cap, who dared hardly breathe, fearing that his master might come to look for him. Seeing, however, that he had a wound in the chest, we concluded that he was abandoned, and no doubt the bivouac also. We moved forward, and reached a cleared semicircle covered with shelters and fires, and seven horses killed and partly eaten. We guessed that more than two hundred men must have passed the night here.

"It was the Russians," said Picart, warming his hands in the ashes. "I remember that yellow horse; he was my mark in the attack. I think I got his master a commission for the next world."

After a thorough look round we revived the fire in front of the shelter, which the leader of the party had apparently occupied.

The snow had stopped, and a dead calm had succeeded the wind. We now began to make soup, but thought it wiser to keep back our own store of meat as there was plenty to be had here. Picart cut some fresh meat with my little axe, enough for soup, and also some to take away with us. We tried to break through the ice for water, but had not enough strength or patience for the job. Now we were quite warm, and the prospect of having some good soup filled me with joy. When one is in real trouble, how little it takes to make one happy! Our saucepan was of no use in its dilapidated condition, but Picart, who was full of resource, and whom nothing put out, set to work to put it right. He cut down a pine-tree to about a foot and a half from the ground, and using the stump as an anvil, and another thick piece as a hammer (wrapped in rag to dull the sound), he began his tinker's work, singing and keeping time with his blows.

As I listened to his powerful voice ringing out, I was obliged to say, "*Mon vieux camarade*, you quite forget: this is hardly the time for singing."

He stopped, seeing that I was afraid of his singing, and showed me the saucepan, now fit to use

"Do you remember," he said, "the day of the battle of Eylau, when we were on the right of the church?"

"Yes, of course I do," I said; "we had weather just like to-day. I have reason to remember it, for a brutal Russian bullet carried away my saucepan. Have you forgotten it, Picart?"

"By Heaven, no!" he said; "that's why I remind you of it, and ask you if a little patience and industry would not have mended your pan?"

"Certainly not, no more than Gregoire's and Lemoine's heads which it carried off, too."

"How the devil do you remember their names?"

"I cannot forget them; Gregoire was a Vélite like me, and a good friend, too. That day I had some biscuits and haricots in the saucepan."

"Yes," said Picart, "which were splashed all over us. Great God! what a day that was!"

While we talked the snow melted in the pan. We put as much flesh in as it would hold, so that we might have some cooked meat to take away with us.

My curiosity prompted me to look into the canvas bag which I had picked up the evening before. I found in it only three cotton handkerchiefs, two razors, and several letters in French, dated from Stuttgart, written to Sir Jacques (*sic*), a Baden officer in a Dragoon regiment. The letters were full of affection from a sister to a brother. I kept them for some time, but they were lost when I was taken prisoner.

Picart sat down before the fire at the entrance to our shelter, his back turned to the north, and opened his knapsack. He drew out a handkerchief, with some salt tied up in one corner, and a little oatmeal in another. It was long enough since I had seen so much, and my mouth watered merely to think of soup salted with real salt, when for the last month all the seasoning I had taken was powder.

I was terribly tired, and the warmth of the fire made me sleepy. I told Picart that I should drop off.

"All right," he said, "drop off. Get into the shelter, and I'll look after the soup, and I can clean and load our arms. How many cartridges have you?"

"Three packets of fifteen."

"Very good. I have four, so that makes a hundred and five; more than enough to do for twenty-five Cossacks, if they should come this way. Get along; go to sleep."

I did not need telling twice, and, wrapping myself in my

bearskin cloak, with my feet to the fire, I fell asleep. I was sleeping soundly, when Picart awoke me, saying :

"*Mon pays*, you have been sleeping like an angel for two hours. I have had supper ; now it's your turn to eat and mine to rest, for I want it badly. Here are our muskets cleaned and loaded. Mind you keep good watch, and when I am rested a bit we will get on."

He wrapped himself in his white cloak and lay down, while I took the saucepan between my knees and began with a tremendous appetite on the soup. I do not think I ever enjoyed, or ever shall enjoy, anything so much.

After my supper, I got up to take my turn at the watch ; but I had not been there for more than five minutes, when I heard the wounded horse neigh loudly several times, and then gallop off on to the middle of the lake. Then he stopped and neighed again. Several other horses answered him, and he started off in the direction of the sound. I hid myself behind a clump of firs, and saw the horse join a detachment of cavalry which was crossing the lake. There were about twenty-three of them. I called Picart, already sleeping so soundly that I could not make him hear, and I was obliged to pull his legs. At last he opened his eyes.

"Well, what is it ?"

"Quick, Picart ! Get up ! Russian cavalry on the lake. We must get back to the wood."

"You ought to have let me sleep. I deserved it."

"I am sorry, *mon vieux*, but you told me to warn you, and no doubt a lot more may be coming."

"Oh yes," he said, "that's true. What a devilish trade this is ! Where are they ?"

"Rather to the right, and out of range."

Five others passed directly afterwards, half a gun-shot off. We saw the first few stop, and, dismounting, make a circle near a place on the lake, where they had probably broken the ice before to water their horses, for we saw them strike the new ice with the butts of their lances.

We decided to pack and be off as soon as possible ; to strike the road again, and, if possible, rejoin the army. It was about eleven o'clock ; thus we had until dark—*i.e.*, about four o'clock. The army, I knew, could not be far off, as the Russians were waiting for us at the crossing of the Bérézina, where all our scattered troops would have to collect.

We hurried our preparations as much as possible. Picart filled his knapsack with meat, and I did the same with the

canvas bag. He decided to regain the road by the way we had come, following the outskirts of the forest. If we were surprised by the Russians, we should have the wood for shelter ; and if we were not molested, we should be on a road we could not easily lose.

We started then—he with more than fifteen pounds of fresh meat, and I carrying the saucepan filled with the meat already cooked. Picart told me that he always liked carrying the food on a march in preference to other things, as after a few days it diminished greatly in quantity ; he quoted *Æsop* as a proof of what he said. As he was talking, we heard musket-shots from the opposite side of the lake. “ Back ! Into the wood ! ” said Picart ; but the noise soon ceased, and we set out again.

The storm, so long quiet, now threatened to break out afresh. Great clouds covered the forest, making it so dark that we dared not enter it for shelter. As we stopped to consider our next move, we heard more firing, this time much nearer. We now saw two troops of Cossacks trying to surround seven of our infantrymen, who were coming down a hill, apparently from a little hamlet on the opposite side of the lake. We could see them fire on the enemy, and then retreat to the side of the lake, evidently trying to gain the forest, where they could set the Cossacks at defiance.

There were more than thirty of the Cossacks ; half of them came down to the edge of the lake opposite to us, to cut off our men’s retreat. Our firearms were ready loaded, and I had thirty cartridges ready to receive them if they came over to our side, and perhaps to help our men to get off. Picart, who kept his eyes fixed on them, said :

“ *Mon pays*, you must load, and I will engage to bring them down like so many ducks. As a beginning, we’ll both fire together.”

Our men, however, continued to retreat. Picart recognised them as the same men who had pillaged the waggon the day before ; but now there were only seven, instead of nine. The cavalry were now only about forty yards off, so Picart, slapping me on the shoulder, said : “ Attention to the word of command ! Fire ! ” The men stopped, astonished, and one of them fell from his horse. When the Cossacks saw this they scattered, and only two remained with the wounded man, who was now sitting on the ice, supporting himself by one hand. Picart, anxious to lose no time, fired a second time, and wounded a horse. Then they all fled, leaving their wounded

comrade, and sheltering themselves behind their horses, which they led by the bridles. We next heard savage cries on our left hand, and saw our unfortunate comrades surrounded by Cossacks on all sides. On our right we could see the two men return for the wounded one, and as he was unable to walk, they dragged him by the legs over the ice.

We specially noticed a Cossack on the look-out for us, gazing at the place where he had first seen us. Picart could contain himself no longer; he fired, and the Cossack was struck on the head, for we saw him reel in his saddle, drop his head forward, and, with his arms stretched out, fall from his horse. He was dead.

At the noise of the shot the Cossacks who surrounded our comrades turned round astonished. Our infantry fired at them, and four Cossacks fell at once. Then we heard shouts of rage, and a stubborn fight followed. We were just about to help in a vigorous manner, when the storm, which had threatened for so long, broke. The snow, which had been falling all the time, grew so thick as completely to blind us. We found ourselves in a thick cloud, obliged to cling to each other to avoid being blown down by the wind. All at once the cloud disappeared, and six yards off we saw the enemy, who yelled out on seeing us. We could not fire, our hands were so frozen by the cold; but we faced them with the bayonet, and regained the wood, while they galloped off.

On entering the wood, we saw the three infantrymen pursued by five Cossacks from the other side of the lake. We fired on them, but without success, and were beginning again, when all at once we saw them sink in the lake and disappear, two Cossacks with them. The unfortunate men had passed over the place which the Russians had broken in for their horses, and the new ice was not strong enough to bear any weight. A third Cossack, seeing the others disappear, tried to stop his horse, and made him rear upright. The horse's hind-legs slipped, and he fell over with his rider, and they, too, disappeared after the others.

We were horror-struck, and our pursuers remained motionless on the ice, not attempting to help their comrades. We could hear piercing cries from the hole in the ice, and several times saw horses' heads appear; then the water bubbled up and spread over the ice.

Ten cavalrymen with their commander came up, and, approaching the fatal spot, plunged their lances in; apparently finding no bottom to the lake, they looked over to our side,

and then galloped off again. We lost sight of them, and all was quiet.

We were now left alone in this deserted spot, leaning on our firearms, and looking at the bodies of the wretched men. After a silence of some minutes, Picart said :

" I have a longing for a pipe. I have a good mind to look for some tobacco among these men ; I shall be very unlucky if I don't find any."

I said this was an imprudent thing to do, as we did not know where the first of the cavalry had gone to ; and as I spoke we saw a number of horsemen and peasants carrying long poles towards the ice where the unfortunate men had been engulfed. A cart with two horses followed them.

" Good-bye to my tobacco," said Picart.

We now thought it advisable to go to the farthest side of the wood ; there we found a shelter, probably belonging to a last night's bivouac, where we could hide ourselves and watch the Cossacks. They partly stripped the bodies of our men, and the peasants came afterwards and stripped them naked. I had the greatest difficulty while this was going on to keep Picart from shooting at them.

The rest of them, with the peasants, went on towards the hole in the ice, and began to make preparations for dragging out the submerged men. When we saw them at work, there was nothing more for us to wait for. It was not quite so cold, and might be about midday. We noticed two Cossacks patrolling the outskirts of the wood, following our footprints in the snow. At sight of them, Picart flew into a rage, and said :

" If they have seen us, there is nothing more for us to do ; they will follow us wherever we go by our footmarks. Let us hurry on, and get into the wood as soon as we can, and if they're not more than two, we can account for them." He stopped directly afterwards. " Confound them ! I had counted on them for tobacco. The cowards ! They were too frightened to follow us "

We kept as much as possible to the forest ; but the fallen trees here and there barred our way, and we had to come out occasionally. Once we looked back, and saw the two men, one behind the other, about thirty yards off. One of them no doubt saw us, as he spurred on his horse, then waited for his companion to come up. We retired into the wood, where we could see them without being seen, and we walked as quickly as possible—sometimes in the wood, sometimes outside—in

order to draw the two men farther and farther from their companions.

After half an hour's walking, we were stopped by a wall of snow ending in a ravine, so we were forced to take a few steps back towards the forest to hide ourselves. The Cossacks were now close to us, but Picart, who knew the art of war, whispered : " I want them at the other side of the ditch ; they will be farther off from the others."

When the Cossacks saw that they could not get through, they went down the ravine so as to come up on the other side of the snow wall. We had in the meantime found a passage for ourselves. We took advantage of the moment when they were in the ditch for getting out of the forest ; but just as we thought we had got rid of them, and I waited for a breathing-space, for my legs were beginning to fail under me, Picart turned his head, and saw our two friends behind, trying to take us by surprise, when we thought they were in front. We re-entered the forest quickly, and, making several détours, we returned and saw them walking very softly. Again we took to the forest, running in and out to deceive them, and finally returning to hide behind a group of little pine-trees covered with snow.

When the first man was about forty yards off, Picart said : " The honour of the first shot is yours, sergeant ; but wait till he comes nearer."

As he spoke, the Cossack signed to his comrade to advance. He turned his horse to the right, facing the bush we were behind. When he was four yards off I fired, and wounded him in the breast. He cried out, and would have fled, but Picart rushed forward, seized the bridle of his horse, and struck him with the point of his bayonet, saying, " Look out, *mon pays* ; take care of the other." As he spoke, the other came up and discharged his pistol at the head of Picart, who fell under the horse he was holding. I ran at the man who had fired, but, seeing me, he threw away his pistol, turned, and galloped off to the plain, a hundred yards from us. I could not fire at him, as my musket was not reloaded, and with my benumbed hands it was impossible to do it.

Picart was now on his feet, but the Cossack I had wounded fell from his horse as if dead. Picart lost no time. He gave me the horse to hold. Walking twenty paces off, he aimed at the other man, sending a ball whistling by his ear, which he avoided by laying himself almost flat on his horse, and then made off at a gallop. Picart reloaded his musket, and then said



to me, "The victory is ours, but we must be quick ; let us use the conqueror's rights, and see if this man has anything for us. We can go off with the horse."

I asked Picart if he was not wounded, but he said it was nothing ; we would talk of that later. He took two pistols, one of them loaded, from the dead man, and said, "I believe he is shamming ; I saw him open his eyes."

In the meantime I tied the horse to a tree, and took the man's sword and a pretty little case set in silver, which I recognised as belonging to a surgeon in our army. This I hung round my neck, but I threw the sword into the brush-wood. The Cossack wore two French uniforms under his cloak, a Cuirassier's and a red Lancer's of the Guard, with an officer's decoration of the Légion d'Honneur, which Picart promptly secured. He wore besides several very fine waist-coats folded in four, making a thick breastplate, which no ball could have pierced. In his pockets we found more than 300 francs in five-franc pieces, two silver watches, and five crosses of honour, all taken from the dead and dying, or from carts left behind. If we had stayed longer we should probably have found more.

Picart picked up his lance and unloaded pistol. He hid them in a bush, and we set off. Picart walked in front, leading the horse, and as I followed it occurred to me to feel inside a portmanteau fastened on the horse, which I could see had belonged to an officer of Cuirassiers of our own army. When I got my hand inside I felt something very much like a bottle. When I told Picart, he cried, "Halt !" The portmanteau was opened in a couple of minutes, and I drew out a bottle filled with something the colour of gin. Picart swallowed some of it without troubling to smell it, and then passed it to me. "Your turn, sergeant." An exquisite sensation impossible to describe came over me after I had drunk some. We agreed that this was the most precious of all our finds. We must be very careful of it ; and as I had in my pouch a little china cup I had brought from Moscow, we decided that it should be the measure each time we drank.

We plunged into the forest, and after a quarter of an hour's painful progress, on account of the quantity of fallen trees, we reached a road five or six feet wide, going precisely in the direction we must take to rejoin the high road where the army must have passed.

Feeling now easier in my mind, I raised my head and looked at Picart. His face was all covered with blood. Blood had

formed in icicles on his moustache and beard. I told him that he was wounded on his head. He said "Yes," he had discovered it when his cap had caught on a branch, and blood had flowed down his face ; it was nothing of any consequence. "And besides," he continued, "this is not the time to bother about it ; it will do this evening."

I proposed that, to get on faster, we should both mount the horse. "Let us try," he said. We therefore took off the wooden saddle he had on his back, leaving only a cloth underneath, and we both got astride, Picart in front, and I behind. We drank some of our spirit and started, holding our muskets across like balancing-poles. We trotted on, sometimes we galloped ; often our way was barred by fallen trees, and the idea occurred to Picart to cut down a few more which looked on the point of falling, and thus to form a barrier against the cavalry if they came after us. He dismounted, and with my axe he felled some small pine-trees across the road, which would effectually provide twenty-five men with work for an hour. After we had mounted again, we trotted on for a quarter of an hour, when he stopped and said :

"*Coquin de Dieu !* this tartar has a hard trot !"

I said he was taking his revenge on us for having killed his master.

"Ah, sergeant," he said, "the drop of drink has made you merry, I see."

Picart arranged the flaps of his white cloak carefully on the horse's back to make his seat easier, and we went on for a quarter of an hour at a walking pace. Sometimes the horse was half buried in the snow. We now saw a road crossing ours, which we concluded must be the high road, but we had to be careful before entering it. We jumped down, and leading the horse, we retired into the forest, in order to examine the road without being seen. We soon recognised it as being the road leading to the Bérézina, by the vast number of corpses half covered by snow, and footmarks coming towards us ; and the traces of blood on the snow looked as if a convoy of French prisoners, escorted by Russians, had passed not long since.

There was therefore no doubt that we were behind the Russian vanguard, and that very soon others would come after us. What were we to do ? To follow the high road was the only course open to us. Picart's opinion was this :

"An idea has occurred to me. You shall be the rearguard, and I the vanguard. I will guide the horse forward if I see

nothing coming ; you, my friend, with your head turned towards his tail, can look out behind."

It was not easy to put Picart's idea into practice. We had to sit back to back, like a double eagle, as he said, with two eyes in front and two behind. We each took a small glass of gin, reserving the rest for a case of necessity, and we put the horse to a walk, setting off again in this silent and lonely forest.

The north wind was bitterly cold, and the rearguard suffered severely from it, hardly able as he was to keep his position ; but, fortunately, the atmosphere was clear, and one could see objects quite a long way off ; the road we followed was also a straight one, so that we had no fear of being surprised at a sudden bend. We progressed in this way for half an hour, when we met in the wood bordering the road seven peasants, who appeared to be waiting for us. They each wore a sheepskin coat, and their boots were made of the bark of trees. They came up to us, wished us good-day in Polish, and seemed pleased to find that we were French. They made us understand that they had to go to Minsk to join the Russian army, as they belonged to the militia ; they had been forced to march against us by blows from the knout, and Cossacks were stationed in all the villages to drive them out.

We went on our way, and when they were out of sight I asked Picart if he had understood what the peasants said. Minsk was one of our great depots in Lithuania, containing storehouses of food, and where a large part of the army was to meet. He said he had understood perfectly, and if it was true, *Papa Beau-père* had played us a nasty trick. As I did not understand, he explained that the Austrians must have betrayed us. He was going on at some length, when he suddenly pulled the horse up, saying, " Look out, there ! Isn't that a column of troops ? " I saw something black, which disappeared again ; but directly afterwards the head of a column appeared as if coming from a deep hollow.

It was easy to see they were Russians. We had just time to turn to the right and enter the forest, but we had hardly gone four paces, when the horse sank breast-deep into the snow and threw me off. I dragged Picart with me into six feet of snow, and we had the greatest trouble in getting out again. The brute of a horse got off, but he cleared a passage for us through the woods, and we took advantage of it at once. After twenty yards we could go no farther owing to the thickness of the trees, so we were obliged to return—there was no choice. We found our horse munching the bark of a tree, to which we

tied him. We went some distance off behind a thick bush, and got ready to defend ourselves. While we waited Picart asked whether our bottle was either lost or broken. Luckily it was all right, so we each had a cup, which we wanted badly. While I undid the bottle, Picart looked to the priming of our guns, and took the snow out of the hammers.

After waiting for about five minutes, the head of the column appeared, preceded by ten or twelve armed Tartars and Kalmoucks, some with lances, others with bows and arrows, and peasants to right and left of the road, armed with anything they could lay their hands on. In the centre of the group were more than two hundred prisoners of our army, hardly able to drag themselves along. Many of them were wounded; some had their arms in slings, others had frozen feet, and leant on thick staves for support. Several had fallen, and in spite of the blows from the peasants and from the lances of the Tartars, they did not move. I cannot describe the pain we suffered at seeing our comrades so ill-treated. Picart said nothing, but I feared every instant that he would rush out from his cover at the offenders. Just then an officer galloped up, and, addressing the prisoners in French, he said :

“ Why don't you walk faster ? ”

“ We cannot,” said a soldier lying in the snow, “ and, for my part, I would rather die here than farther on.”

The officer said that he must have patience, that carts were coming, and that the most seriously ill would be put into them.

“ You will be better off than you were with Napoleon, for at the present moment he is a prisoner with all his Guard and the rest of his army, and the bridges over the Bérézina are cut.”

“ Napoleon a prisoner with his Guard ! ” replied an old soldier. “ May God forgive you, sir ! You do not know them. They would only be taken dead. They swore it ! They cannot be prisoners ! ”

“ Come,” said the officer, “ here are the waggons.”

We now saw two of our waggons and a travelling forge filled with sick and wounded men. Five men were thrown out, whom the peasants at once stripped absolutely naked. These were replaced by five others, three of whom were unable to move by themselves. We heard the officer order the peasants to return the clothes they had taken to the prisoners most in need of them. As they did not hurry themselves to obey his orders, he gave each of them several smart blows with a whip. We then heard him say to some soldiers who were thanking him:

"I am French myself. I have been in Russia for twenty years. My father died there, but my mother is still alive. I hope now that we shall get back to France and our property there. I know quite well you have not been conquered by force of arms, but by this unendurable Russian climate."

"And the want of food, besides," replied a wounded man. "If it were not for that, we should be at St. Petersburg."

"Perhaps so," said the officer.

The convoy moved slowly on.

When it was out of sight we went for our horse, and found him with his head in the snow searching for grass. By chance we came upon the remains of a fire. We relit it and warmed our frozen limbs. We jumped up every moment, and looked to right and left, when all at once we heard a groan, and saw a man coming towards us almost naked. He had on a coat half burnt, a dilapidated forage-cap on his head. His feet were wrapped in rags, and string was tied round them, and round a ragged pair of grey trousers. His nose was almost frozen off, his ears covered with wounds. Only his thumb remained on the right hand; all the fingers had dropped off. This was one of the poor wretches abandoned by the Russians. We could not understand a word he said. When he saw our fire he almost threw himself upon it; he seemed as if he would devour it, kneeling down in front of the flame without a word. We got him with difficulty to swallow a little gin. More than half of what we gave him was wasted, for his teeth chattered so he could hardly unclothe them.

His groans ceased, his teeth had almost stopped chattering, when he suddenly turned pale, and seemed to collapse without a word or sigh. Picart tried to raise him up, but he only lifted a corpse. This scene took place in less than ten minutes.

Everything my old comrade saw and heard seemed to impress him very much. He took his musket, and without a word to me turned on to the high road, as if there was nothing more to trouble about. I hastened after him, leading the horse, and when I caught him up I told him to mount. He did so without speaking, and I after him, and we pressed forward, hoping to get out of the forest before nightfall.

After an hour's trotting, seeing nothing but dead bodies along the road, we came to what we took for the end of the forest. We found, however, that it was only a large clearing in semicircular form. In the centre was a fair-sized house with a few huts round it. This was one of the posting-stations, but, unfortunately for us, there were horses tied to the trees.

Their riders came out of the house, and formed in order on the road ; then they trotted off. There were eight of them, in white cloaks and very high-crested helmets. They were like the Cuirassiers we fought against at Krasnoë, in November. Luckily, they went off in the opposite direction from the road we were making for.

On re-entering the forest, we found it impossible to advance twenty yards. No human being could ever have set foot there, the trees were so crowded together, the brushwood was so thick, and there were so many fallen trunks half buried in the snow. We were forced to come out, and run the risk of being seen by following the forest outside. Our poor horse sank at every step into the snow, and night was drawing on before we had gone half our distance. To rest for a few minutes, we entered a road leading into the forest. We dismounted, and flew at once to our precious bottle. This was our fifth attack, and we could now see its contents diminishing.

As there were a good many felled trees about, we decided to get as far to the other side of them as possible, and we halted against a pile of wood which would prove a shelter. After Picart had rid himself of his knapsack, and I of my saucepan, he said, " Now for the main thing—a fire. Quick ! an old bit of linen."

My old shirt was a wonderful thing for catching a blaze. I tore off a bit and gave it to Picart ; he made it into a wick, and putting it with a bit of powder into the priming-pan of his gun, he fired. The linen caught fire, but a terrible report was the consequence, repeated again and again by echoes, and I feared it would betray us.

My poor friend Picart was not the same man since he had seen the prisoners and heard the officer's account of the Emperor's surrender. It had made a great effect on him ; he even complained at times of a bad pain in his head, which was not at all the result of the Cossack's pistol. I cannot explain it. He forgot that he had loaded his musket, and after the report he just sat still without speaking, and finally only abused himself for a conscript and an old blockhead. Several dogs were set barking. Then he said he expected they would come and track us out like wolves. I tried to reassure him by saying that we need fear nothing at that late hour.

We soon had a good fire, as we found some really dry wood ; we also found, to our joy, some straw, probably hidden by peasants. Providence seemed to smile on us again, and Picart said, " Cheer up, *mon pays* ; we are saved just for this night !

God will do the rest to-morrow, and if we are lucky enough to find the Emperor, it will be all right."

Picart along with all the veterans, who idolised the Emperor, thought that once with him everything was bound to succeed, and that, in fact, nothing was impossible.

We made a comfortable litter for our horse with straw, and gave him something to eat as well, all the time keeping him ready harnessed, and with the portmanteau strapped on his back, ready for the first alarm. Picart took a piece of cooked meat from the saucepan to thaw it, and said :

"Do you know, I am thinking a great deal of what the Russian officer said."

"What do you mean ?"

"Why, that the Emperor and the Guard were taken prisoners. I know, of course, that it's not that—couldn't possibly be—but I can't get it out of my wooden head. It sticks there, and I shall have no peace till I am with the regiment. Just now let's eat and rest a little, and afterwards"—he went on in Picardy patois—"we'll drink a *tiote goutte*."

The temperature was almost mild just then, we ate the horse-flesh without much appetite, and Picart talked by himself, swearing all the time.

"I have forty gold napoleons in my belt, and seven Russian gold pieces, not counting the five-franc pieces ; I would give the whole with all my heart to be with the regiment again. That reminds me," he said ; "the pieces are not in my belt, but are sewn inside my white service waistcoat, and, as one never knows what may happen, they will belong to you."

"Well," I said, "now for my last will and testament. I have eight hundred francs in notes and in gold. You may dispose of it all, if it is God's will I should die before finding the regiment."

While warming myself, I put my hand mechanically into the little canvas bag I carried, and found something hard like a bit of cord and as long as two fingers. On examining it I found it was tobacco. What a discovery for poor Picart ! When I gave it to him, he let fall a bit of meat he was eating, and took a quid of tobacco instead, to wait with, he said, while he found his pipe. As it was hardly the time to search for it, he contented himself with his quid, and I with a little cigar which I made *à l'Espagnole* with a piece of paper.

We had been resting for about two hours, and it was not yet seven o'clock. We had therefore eleven or twelve hours yet to wait before continuing our march.

Picart had been walking a few yards off for a moment, and I was getting uneasy about him, when I heard a rustling in the brushwood in the opposite direction from that he had taken. I took my musket and put myself ready, when Picart appeared.

"It is all right, *mon pays*—quite right," he said in a mysterious voice, signing to me to keep silence. Then he told me that two women had just passed along the road, one carrying a bundle and the other a pail. They had stopped to rest for a few minutes, chattering like magpies. "We will follow them," he said; "probably we shall come to a village or some hut where we shall get shelter and greater safety than here, for listen to those confounded dogs barking!"

"But," I said, "we shall be sure to find Russians!"

He said we would risk that. So we set off again in the night, in the midst of a forest, not knowing where we were going, and with only a few footmarks in the snow to guide us. The footmarks ceased suddenly, and when we found them again, they turned off to the right. This put us out, as they led us away from the high road. Very often, too, we almost lost sight of them, and Picart had frequently to go down on his knees and search for them with his hands.

Picart led the horse by the bridle, and I followed, holding his tail. A little farther on we found two roads, both of them with footmarks, and we stopped, not knowing which to take. We thought of making the horse go first, and trusting to him to guide us; but at last God took compassion on our misery. We heard a dog bark, and a little farther on we came to a fairly large building. Imagine the roof of one of our barns placed on the ground, and you will have an idea of the kind of building now before us. We walked round it three times before we could discover a door, hidden as it was by a thatched roof reaching down to the ground. Picart went under the roof, and found a second door, at which he knocked gently. No one answered. He knocked again. Still no answer. Thinking the house was deserted, he was about to push open the door, when a feeble voice was heard; the door opened, and an old woman appeared, holding a piece of resinous wood lighted in her hand. At seeing Picart, she dropped the wood in terror and fled. My companion picked up the wood, still alight, and advanced some steps. I fastened the horse up near the door, and on going in found Picart in a cloud of smoke. In his white cloak, with the light in his hand, he looked like a penitent. He broke the silence by the best greeting he could muster in Polish, and



I repeated it after him. An old man heard us, and came forward. When he saw Picart, he exclaimed :

" Ah, Frenchmen, that is well ! "

He said it in Polish, and repeated it in German. We told them that we were Frenchmen of Napoleon's Guard. At that name the Pole bowed, and would have kissed our feet. At the word " French," repeated by the old woman, two younger women came out of a little recess, and showed the greatest joy. Picart recognised them for the two women whose footsteps we had followed.

After being with these good people for about five minutes the heat of the cottage, to which I was so unaccustomed, nearly suffocated me. I retreated to the door, where I fell down unconscious.

Picart ran to help me, but the old woman and one of her daughters had already lifted me up, and placed me on a wooden stool. They relieved me of the saucepan and of my bearskin cloak, and made me lie down on a camp-bed covered with skins. The women seemed very sorry for us, seeing our great misery, and especially for me, as I was so young, and had suffered so much more than my comrade. My sufferings had made me so wretched that it was pitiful to see me. The old man had busied himself in bringing in our horse, and they did all they could for us. Picart remembered the gin in my pouch, and made me swallow a little, and I began to feel much better.

The old woman took off my boots for me. I had not had them off since Smolensk—that is to say, since 10th November ; it was now the 23rd. One of the girls filled a great basin with warm water and, kneeling down, took my feet gently one after the other and washed them, pointing out that I had a wound in the right foot. It was an old chilblain of 1807, at the time of the battle of Eylau. I had not felt it since then, but now it opened again, and I suffered cruelly from it.

The other girl, who seemed to be the elder, performed the same office for Picart. He submitted calmly, but seemed embarrassed. I said he had had an inspiration from God when he thought of following the girls' footsteps.

" Yes," he said ; " but when I saw them in the forest, I never thought we should be received like this. I did not tell you," he continued, " that my head ached like the devil—and I still feel it. I believe that dog of a Cossack's ball did more damage than I thought. We'll see."

He untied the cord under his chin, which held the sheepskin

ear-coverings in their places ; but hardly had he done this when the blood began to flow.

"Just look !" he said. "But that's nothing—it's only a scratch ; the bullet must have slipped down the side of my head."

The Pole helped him off with his shoulder-belt. He had almost forgotten how to take off that and his fur cap, he had slept in them for so long. The girl who had washed his feet washed his head too. Every one gathered round to serve him. The poor fellow was so much touched by their care for him that great tears rolled down his face. Scissors were needed to cut his hair, and all at once I remembered the surgeon's little case which I had taken from the Cossack. We found everything we wanted there for dressing the wound—two pairs of scissors, and several other surgical instruments, with lint and bandages. After cutting the hair off, the old woman sucked the wound, which went deeper than we thought. Then we put on some lint, a bandage, and a handkerchief. We found the ball in the midst of some rags which filled his cap. It had gone right through the left wing of the Imperial eagle on the front of the cap. To his great joy, he also found his pipe, a regular cutty, not three inches long, and he began to smoke it at once.

When our feet were washed, they dried them with lamb-skins, which served afterwards as a carpet ; and on my chilblain they put some ointment, assuring me it would soon make me all right. They gave me a bit to take away in a piece of linen ; this I put in the surgeon's case with all the instruments I had used for Picart. We already felt much better, and we thanked the Poles for all the care they had taken of us. They told us how grieved they were not to be able to do more. On a journey one must lodge one's enemies and wash their feet. How much more one's friends ! Just then the old woman screamed and ran out. Her great dog had run off with Picart's cap. They wanted to beat him, but we begged him off. I proposed to Picart that we should examine the portmanteau still on the horse's back, so we carried it near the stove. First we found nine handkerchiefs embroidered in silk. "Quick !" said Picart ; "two each for our princesses, and one for the old mother, and the others we will keep." This was done immediately, to every one's great satisfaction. Then we found three pairs of officer's epaulettes, three silver watches, seven crosses of honour, two silver spoons, two dozen Hussars' gilt buttons, two boxes of razors, six bank-notes of a hundred roubles each,

and a pair of linen trousers stained with blood. I hoped to find a shirt, but was disappointed. I had greater need of that than of anything else, as the warmth had revived the vermin which devoured me.

The girls opened their eyes wide as they looked at our presents, unable to believe they were really theirs. The gilt buttons gave them greater pleasure than anything else, and also some gold rings, which I enjoyed putting on their fingers. The girl who had washed my feet noticed, I am sure, that I gave her the best. Very likely the Cossacks cut off the dead men's fingers to take the rings.

To the old man we gave a large English watch and two razors, besides all the Russian small money, amounting to more than thirty francs. We noticed that he fixed his eyes continually on a commander's cross with the Emperor's portrait, so we also gave that to him. I cannot describe his pleasure. He pressed it several times to his lips and his heart, and finally fastened it round his neck by a leather band, making us understand that only death should part him from it.

We asked for some bread, and they brought us what they had not dared give us before, they said, it was so bad. We really could not eat it. It was made of a black paste, full of grains of barley, rye, and bits of straw, rough enough to tear one's throat to pieces. They said this bread came from the Russians, that three leagues off the French had beaten them that very morning, and had taken a large convoy from them. This news had been brought to them by the Jews who were flying from all the villages on the road to Minsk. They had also sold them this bread, which was quite uneatable, and although I had not eaten any bread for more than a month, I could not manage to get my teeth into it. For a long time, too, my lips had been so cracked by the frost that they bled constantly.

When the peasants saw that we could not eat the bread, they brought us a piece of mutton, a few potatoes, some onions, and some pickled cucumber. They gave us, in fact, everything they had, saying that they would do their best to get us something better. We put the mutton into the saucepan to make some soup. The old man told us that half a league off there was a village filled with refugee Jews, and as they had carried off all their food with them, he hoped he could find there something better to eat than what they had set before us. We wished to give him some money, but he refused it, saying that what we had given him and his daughters would be quite

sufficient, and that one of them had already gone off with her mother and the big dog.

They had made a bed for us on the ground, of straw and sheepskins. Picart had already gone to sleep, and I soon followed his example. We were awakened by the loud barking of the dog. "Good!" said the Pole, "my wife and daughter have come back." They brought us some milk, a few potatoes, and a little cake of rye-meal, which they had procured by heavy payment, but no brandy.

The little there was had been taken by the Russians. We thanked these kind people who had walked nearly two leagues, with the snow up to their knees, in the middle of the night, too, in terrible cold, and exposed to the attacks of wolves and bears, which abound in Lithuanian forests. We made some milk soup and drank it at once. I felt much better after I had eaten, and then sat reflecting, my head in my hands. Picart asked me what I was thinking of.

"I am thinking," I said, "that if I were not with you, and bound by honour and my oath, I should stay here in this forest with these good people."

"Cheer up," he said. "I have had a lucky dream. I dreamed I was in the barracks at Courbevoie, eating a piece of *Mère aux bouts*' pudding, and drinking a bottle of Suresnes wine."

While Picart was speaking, I noticed that his face was very red, and that he frequently put his hand to his forehead. I asked him if his head pained him. He said it did, but that was caused very likely by the heat, or by having slept too long, but he seemed to me to be in a fever. His vision of the barracks at Courbevoie confirmed me in this opinion. "I want to go on with my dream, and try to find *Mère aux bouts* again," he said. "Good-night!" He was asleep in two minutes.

I, too, tried to rest, but my sleep was constantly broken by the pains in my legs, the result of my continued overwalking. The dog began to bark soon after Picart went to sleep; he roused the people of the house, and the old man, who was seated on a bench near the stove, got up and seized a lance fastened to a long pine-branch, his only means of defence. He ran to the door, followed by his wife, and I did the same, taking care not to wake Picart, and armed myself with my musket and bayonet. We heard some one trying the outer door, and in reply to the old man's question of who was there, a nasal voice answered, "Samuel!" The wife then told her husband that it was a Jew from the village. I resumed my

place on hearing that a son of Israel was at the door, taking care to collect all our possessions around me, so little confidence had I in the newcomer. I slept for two hours, when Picart awoke me to take my share of the mutton soup. He still complained of a bad pain in his head, saying he had dreamt of nothing but Paris and Courbevoie, and forgetting that he had already related his dream to me, told me that he had been dancing at the *barrière du Roule*, and had drunk with the Grenadiers who were killed at the battle of Eylau.

As we sat down to eat, the Jew gave us a bottle of gin, which Picart took possession of at once, and speaking in German, he asked its history. When he tasted it, all the thanks the Jew got was the exclamation that it was not worth the devil. It was bad gin made from potato-spirit.

The idea came to me that we might make use of the Jew as a guide ; we had quite enough with us to tempt his love of gain. Picart approved of my plan, and just as he was prepared to propose it, the horse raised himself, terrified, trying to break his tether, and the dog gave tongue, and at the same moment some wolves began howling at the door. Picart took his musket to chase them away, but our host warned him against this, on account of the Russians. He contented himself, therefore, by taking his sword in one hand, and in the other a piece of flaming pine. Then opening the door, he ran at the wolves and put them to flight. He came in again, saying that the air had done him good, and that his headache had nearly gone. The wolves afterwards came back, but we took no notice of them.

As I had expected, the Jew asked us if we had anything to sell or exchange. I said to Picart that now was the time for proposals, as we wanted to be put on our way to Borisow, or to the first French outpost. I asked him how far we were from the *Bérézina*, and he answered nine leagues by the high road ; but we made him understand that we wished to get there by a shorter route, and I proposed that he should guide us if we could arrange it. We gave him the three pairs of epaulettes, and a bank-note worth 100 roubles, the whole the value of 500 francs ; I made the conditions, however, that the epaulettes should be left in charge of our host, who would hand them over to him on his return, and that I would give him the bank-note on arriving at our destination—that is, at the first French outpost. When he returned the epaulettes would be given to him on presentation of a silk handkerchief which I showed to the assembled company. The handkerchief was to be given to

the younger daughter, who had washed my feet, and the Jew agreed to give our host and hostess 25 roubles. The son of Israel accepted the conditions, observing, however, that he should be running a great many risks in thus leaving the high road. Our host said how sorry he felt that he was not ten years younger, so that he might guide us for nothing, and defend us also against any Russians who might come; saying this, he shook his halberd. He gave the Jew a great many instructions as to the road, and he at last consented to guide us, after satisfying himself that everything we had given him was of full value.

At nine in the morning we started. It was 24th November. The Polish family stood on the highest piece of ground they could find, following us with their eyes, and waving to us with their hands. Our guide went first, leading our horse. Picart talked to himself, sometimes standing and going through the musket-drill. All at once he stopped, and, on turning round, I saw him motionless, porting arms as if on parade. Suddenly he thundered out, "Vive l'Empereur!" I went up to him, and, taking him by the arm, I said, "What is the matter with you, Picart?" fearing that he had gone mad.

"What!" he answered, as if only just awake, "isn't the Emperor inspecting us?"

I was distressed to hear him, and answering that it was not to-day, but to-morrow, I took his arm, and hurried him along to catch up with the Jew. Large tears were falling down his face.

"What," I said, "an old soldier crying!"

"Let me cry," he said; "it will do me good. I feel miserable, and if we don't get to the regiment to-morrow, it's all up with me."

"Cheer up! We shall be there to-morrow, I hope, or the next day at latest. How's this? You are taking on just like a woman."

"That is so," he said; "I can't explain it. I was either sleeping or dreaming; but I am better now."

"That's right, *mon vieux*. It's nothing; it has often happened to me before. But since you came I have felt quite hopeful."

As I talked, I saw our guide stop continually to listen. Suddenly Picart threw himself full length in the snow, and shouted in a commanding voice, "Silence!"

"Now," I said to myself, "he's done with—my old comrade has gone mad! What will become of me?"

I looked at him, petrified. He then got up, and shouted again, "Vive l'Empereur! The guns! Listen! We're saved!"

"What do you mean?" I said.

"Yes, listen," he went on.

I listened, and really heard the sound of distant guns.

"Ah, now I can breathe again!" he said; "the Emperor is not a prisoner, as that fool of an emigrant said yesterday. It had got regularly on my brain, and I should have died of rage and mortification. Now let us go in that direction; it's a safe guide."

The Israelite assured us that the guns were in the direction of the Bérézina.

Half an hour later we could not advance any farther, so difficult had our march become; our guide believed he had missed the way. We heard the booming of the guns continually; it might be about midday. All at once the sound of the guns ceased, the wind got up again, and the snow began falling in such quantities that we could not see each other, and the poor son of Israel gave up leading the horse. We advised him to mount the beast, which advice he took. I began to feel terribly tired and uneasy in my mind, but said nothing; while Picart swore like a madman because he could not hear the guns, and at the wind which prevented our hearing. The trees were now so close together that we could not possibly penetrate through them. Every moment something caught our feet, and we fell headlong on the ground half buried in the snow; and after much painful walking we found ourselves at the place we had left an hour before.

We now stopped for a few minutes, drank some of the bad gin which the Jew had given us, and discussed our next move. We decided that we must return to the high road. I asked the guide if he could take us back to where we had spent the night, in the event of our not being able to find the road. He said he could, but that we must make landmarks where we passed. Picart accomplished this by "blazing" the young birches and pines as he went along. When we had gone about half a league, we came upon a cottage; it was only just in time, as my strength was now failing me. We decided to halt there for half an hour while we fed the horse, and ourselves also. By a stroke of luck, we found there a quantity of dry wood for burning, two benches made of rough wood, and three sheepskins; these we thought we would take away with us, in case we were obliged to spend the night in the forest.

We warmed ourselves while we ate a piece of horse-flesh. Our guide would not touch it, but drew from under his sheep-skin cloak a wretched-looking cake of barley-flour mixed with straw, which he begged us to share with him. He swore to us by his father Abraham that he had nothing with him but that and a few nuts. We therefore divided it into four ; the Jew took two parts, and we each had one. We also drank a little of the bad gin. When I offered some to him he refused, as he would not drink out of our cup, but he accepted some poured into the hollow of his hand.

Then he told us that the next hut was a good hour's walk off, so we resolved to set out at once, for fear of being overtaken by the darkness. The road was so narrow that we had the greatest difficulty in getting along, but Samuel, our guide, had pluck, and kept on assuring us that it would become wider farther on.

As a finishing stroke to our misfortunes, the snow began to fall again heavily, and completely hid the way from us. Our guide burst into tears, saying that he did not know where we were. We tried to retrace our steps, but this was worse, as the snow flew straight in our faces, and now the best thing we could do was to stand against a group of pine-trees, waiting till it pleased God to stop the snowstorm. It lasted for more than half an hour longer. We were almost perished with cold.

The Jew continually cried out, " My God ! my God ! " For my part, I said nothing, but my thoughts were gloomy, and had it not been for my bearskin and the Rabbi's cap, which I wore under my shako, I should have yielded to the cold.

As soon as the weather grew a little better, we tried to find our way, but a complete calm had followed the storm, so that we could not distinguish the north from the south. We were now completely lost. We walked at random in great circles, continually coming back to the same place.

Picart swore continually, but now it was at the Jew. However, after walking for some time, we found ourselves in an open space, about four hundred yards in circumference, and we hoped to find a road here, but after wandering round it several times, we discovered nothing. We looked at each other, hoping for an idea from some one. My old comrade leant his musket against a tree, and, looking all round him, he drew his sword from its sheath. Hardly had he done so, when the poor Jew, thinking he was going to be killed, set up a piercing shriek, and, leaving the horse, prepared to fly ; his strength, however, failed him, and he fell on his knees, imploring mercy



of God and of us ; quite needlessly, however, as Picart had only drawn his sword to cut down a small birch-tree and consult it as to our direction. He looked fixedly at the part of the tree still in the ground, and then said calmly, " That is the direction we must take. The bark on this side, which must be the north, is a little red and rotted, and the other side, that of the south, is white and perfect. Let us walk towards the south."

We had no time to lose, as our greatest dread was that night should overtake us. We tried to beat out a path for ourselves, taking care not to lose the direction of our starting-point.

Just then the Jew, who was in front of us, uttered a cry, and we saw him stretched full length on the ground. He had fallen down in trying to drag the horse between two trees where there was not room to pass. The poor *cognia* could neither go forward nor back. We had to stop and disentangle the man from the horse ; the burden the horse carried, as well as his harness, had been pressed backwards on to his hind-quarters.

I was much put out at this loss of time. I would willingly have left the horse behind, but at the end of half an hour's efforts we discovered a fairly wide path, which the Jew recognised as being the continuation of the road we had lost. He knew the road by some beehives in the trees—too high, unfortunately, for us to reach.

Picart looked at his watch, and saw that it was nearly four o'clock, therefore we had no time to lose. We now found ourselves close to a frozen lake, known to our guide. We crossed it without difficulty, and, turning to the left, continued our journey. Very soon we saw four men, who stopped on seeing us. We naturally got on guard at once, but it was soon apparent that they were more frightened than we, and after consulting together they came towards us, wishing us good-day. They were four Jews, known to our guide, belonging to a village on the high road. As the village was occupied by the French army, they could not possibly remain there without dying of cold and hunger. The provisions were all gone, and not a single house was left for shelter, even for the Emperor. From them we learnt, to our joy, that the French army was only two leagues off. They advised us, however, to go no farther that day, as we might easily miss the road. We could pass the night in the first hut we should come to, not far off. They left us, bidding us good-night, and we fortunately soon found our resting-place for the night. There was a quantity of straw and wood in the hut, and we immediately lit a good fire in an earthenware stove we found there. It would have taken too long to make soup,

so we contented ourselves with a piece of roast meat, and then decided to watch in turn two hours at a time, with loaded weapons near us.

I do not know how long I had been asleep, when I was awakened by the horse, frightened in his turn by the howling of the wolves outside. Picart took a long pole, and tying some straw and resinous wood to the end, he lit it and rushed on the animals, holding his flaming pole in one hand and his sword in the other, and for a moment they fled. He returned triumphant, but he had scarcely lain down again when they came back with redoubled fury. He then took a great piece of lighted wood, and, throwing it a dozen yards off, he told the Jew to take out a quantity of dry wood to keep up the blaze. After this we heard no more howling.

At about four o'clock Picart woke me with an agreeable surprise. Without telling me, he had made soup with some oatmeal and flour he had left, and had roasted a good piece of horse-flesh. We both set to with a good appetite. Picart had given the Jew his share, and we took care of the horse also. We had filled several wooden tubs with snow, which was now melted; we purified it by putting in a quantity of lighted charcoal. This served for our drink, for soup, and for watering the horse, who had drunk nothing since the evening before. After looking to our boots, I took a piece of charcoal, and wrote the following inscription on a plank in large letters:

"Two Grenadiers of the Emperor Napoleon's Guard, lost in this forest, passed the nights of 24th and 25th November in this hut. The day before they enjoyed the hospitality of a kind Polish family." This inscription I signed.

We had scarcely gone fifty yards, when our horse stopped short. Our guide said he thought he saw something on the road, and on going nearer there were two wolves sitting waiting for us. Picart fired, and the wolves disappeared. Half an hour afterwards we were safe.

We first came across a bivouac of twelve men, German soldiers attached to our army. We stopped near their fire to ask for news. They looked at us without answering, and then consulted among themselves. They were in the last stage of destitution. Three dead bodies were lying near them. As our guide had now kept his bargain, we gave him what we promised him, and after asking him again to thank the good Poles for us, we bade him good-bye and a safe journey. He strode off quickly and disappeared.

We now prepared to gain the high road, only ten minutes'

walk off, when five of the Germans surrounded us, begging us to leave our horse behind to be killed, and assuring us we should have our share. Two of them took hold of his bridle, but Picart, who had had enough of this, said, in bad German, that if they did not leave hold of the bridle he would cut their faces for them with his sword, and he drew it out of its sheath. The Germans took no notice, and Picart repeated what he had said. No answer. He then gave the two holding the bridle a smart blow with his fist which stretched them in the snow. He asked me to hold the horse, and said to the others: "Come on, if you have any pluck." Seeing, however, that no one moved, he took three pieces of meat out of the saucepan and gave them to the men. Those lying on the ground got up at once for their share. I saw that they were almost dead of hunger, and to make up for our rough treatment of them, I gave them a piece already cooked, weighing more than three pounds. They threw themselves on the food ravenously enough, and we continued on our way. A little farther on, we came on two fires almost extinguished, several men, half dead, lying around them. Two of them spoke to us; one cried, "Comrades, are you going to kill the horse? I only want a little blood!"

We did not answer. We were still a gunshot from the high road. When at last we reached it, I said aloud to Picart, "We are saved."

A man near us, wrapped in a half-burned cloak, said, raising his voice, "Not yet!" He moved off, looking at me and shrugging his shoulders. He knew what was going on better than I did.

Soon afterwards we saw a detachment of about thirty men, engineers and *pontoniers*. I recognised them as the men we had met at Orcha, where they formed part of the garrison. This detachment, commanded by three officers, and which had joined us only four days ago, had not suffered. They looked strong and well, and were travelling in the direction of the Bérézina. I asked an officer to direct us to the Imperial quarters, and he replied that it was still in the rear, but had begun to move, and that we should soon see the head of the column appear. He warned us to look well after our horse, as the Emperor had given orders to take all that were found for the use of the artillery and the wounded. While we waited for the column we hid ourselves in the wood.

I cannot possibly describe all the sufferings, anguish, and scenes of desolation I had seen and passed through, nor those

which I was fated still to see and endure ; they left deep and terrible memories, which I have never forgotten.

This was 25th November, perhaps about seven o'clock in the morning, and as yet it was hardly light. I was musing on all I had seen, when the head of the column appeared. Those in advance seemed to be Generals, a few on horseback, but the greater part on foot. There were also a great number of other officers, the remnant of the Doomed Squadron and Battalion formed on the 22nd, and barely existing at the end of three days. Those on foot dragged themselves painfully along, almost all of them having their feet frozen and wrapped in rags or in bits of sheepskin, and all nearly dying of hunger. Afterwards came the small remains of the Cavalry of the Guard. The Emperor came next, on foot, and carrying a baton. He wore a large cloak lined with fur, a dark-red velvet cap with black fox fur on his head. Murat walked on foot at his right, and on his left the Prince Eugène, Viceroy of Italy. Next came the Marshals, Berthier—Prince of Neufchâtel—Ney, Mortier, Lefebvre, with other Marshals and Generals whose corps had been nearly annihilated.

The Emperor mounted a horse as soon as he passed : so did a few of those with him, the greater part of them having no more horses to ride. Seven or eight hundred officers and non-commissioned officers followed, walking in order and perfect silence, and carrying the eagles of their different regiments, which so often had led them to victory. This was all that remained of sixty thousand men.

After them came the Imperial Guard on foot, marching also in order. The first were the Chasseurs. Poor Picart, who had not seen the army for a month, gazed in silence ; but it was easy to see how much he felt. He struck the ground many times with the butt of his musket, then his breast and forehead with his clenched hand. Great tears fell from his eyes, rolled down his cheeks, and froze in his moustache. Then, turning to me, he said :

" I don't know, *mon pays*, if I am awake or dreaming. It breaks my heart to see our Emperor on foot, his baton in his hand. He, so great, who made us all so proud of him ! " He went on : " Did you notice how he looked at us ? "

The Emperor had turned his head towards us as he passed. He looked at us as he always looked at the men of his Guard when he met them alone. He seemed, in this hour of misfortune, to inspire us by his glance with confidence and courage. Picart declared that the Emperor had recognised him, which

was quite possible. My old comrade, fearful of looking ridiculous, had taken off his white cloak and carried it over his left arm, and although his head still pained him, he had put on his fur cap, not liking to appear in the sheepskin the Poles had given him. Poor Picart forgot all his own miseries, and now only thought of the Emperor, and of the comrades he longed to see.

At last the old Grenadiers appeared. These were the first regiment; Picart belonged to the second. We were not long in catching sight of them, however, as the first column was a short one—in my opinion quite half were missing. When at last his own regiment came up to us, Picart advanced to join it.

Then some one said :

"Look ! Isn't that like Picart ? "

"Yes," answered Picart, "it is I ; and I will not leave you again, except to die."

The company immediately took possession of him (for the sake of the horse, of course). I walked with him for some time longer, to get a piece of the horse's flesh if they killed him, but a shout was heard :

"The horse belongs to the company, like the man ! "

"I belong to the company, certainly," said Picart ; "but the sergeant, who claims a bit of the horse, killed his master in the first place."

"Very well, then," said a sergeant, who knew me, "he shall have some."

This sergeant took the place of a sergeant-major who had died the day before.

The column came to a halt, and an officer asked Picart where he came from, and how he happened to be in front, as those who had escorted the convoy had come back three days ago. The halt lasted for some time. Picart related his adventures, stopping continually to ask after several comrades whom he failed to see in the ranks. They were all dead. He dared not ask after his bedmate, who was also from his own country. But at last he ventured.

"And where is Rougeau ? "

"At Krasnoë," said the drummer.

"Ah ! I understand."

"Yes," continued the drummer, "he died from a ball which cut both his legs off. Before he died he made you his executor. He gave me for you his cross, his watch, and a little leather bag containing money and different things. He begged me to tell you that they were for his mother. If, like him, you

were so unfortunate as not to see France again, you were to commission some one else."

The drummer, named Patrice, then took all the things out of his knapsack before all the company, saying to Picart :

"I give them to you just as I received them from his hands. He took them out of his knapsack—which we replaced under his head—and directly afterwards he died."

"If I have the good fortune to get back to Picardy," said my friend, "I will carry out my comrade's last wishes."

They began the march, and I bade good-bye to my old friend, saying we should meet again at bivouac in the evening.

Then I waited by the side of the road until my regiment came by, as I heard it formed part of the rearguard.

After the Grenadiers came more than thirty thousand men, almost all with their feet and hands frozen, a great number of them without firearms, as they were quite unable to make use of them. Many of them walked leaning on sticks ; generals, colonels, other officers, privates, men on horseback, men on foot, men of all the different nations making up our army, passed in a confused rabble, covered with cloaks and coats all torn and burnt, wrapped in bits of cloth, in sheepskins, in everything they could lay their hands on to keep out the cold. They walked silently without complaining, keeping themselves ready as they could for any possible struggle with the enemy. The Emperor in our midst inspired us with confidence, and found resources to save us yet. There he was—always the great genius ; however miserable we might be, with him we were always sure of victory in the end.

I had more than an hour to wait before the column had passed by, and after that there was a long train of miserable wretches following the regiments mechanically. They had reached the last stage of destitution, and could not hope to get across the Bérézina, although we were now so near it. Then I saw the remains of the Young Guard, skirmishers, flank-men, and some of the light companies, escaped from Krasnoë. All these regiments mingled together and marched in perfect order. Behind them came the artillery and several waggons. The bulk of the artillery, commanded by General Nègre, had already gone before. Next came the Fusiliers-Chasseurs. Their numbers were greatly diminished. Our regiment was still separated from me by some pieces of artillery, drawn by poor beasts with no power left in them. After that I saw my regiment marching to left and right of the road to join the Fusiliers-Chasseurs. The Adjutant-Major, Roustan, saw me the first,

and cried out, "Hallo, poor Bourgogne! Is that you? We thought you were dead behind us, and here you are alive in front! This is first-rate. Have you met some of our men behind?" I told him that for the last three days I had been in the woods to avoid being taken by the Russians. M. Césarisse said to the Colonel that he knew I had stayed behind since the 22nd, and that he was surprised beyond everything to see me again. My company came at last, and I took my own place in it before my friends were aware of it. When at last they saw me, they came round me asking questions which I had not strength to answer; I was as overwhelmed to find myself once more amongst my comrades as if I had been with my own family







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